J. B. S. Haldane on Britain's Intellectuals

FIFTEEN CENTS

September 3, 1940

NEW MASSES

ZERO HOUR

On the brink of war, yes, that is where we are today. Not only has "peace" become an off-color word in the administration's vocabulary, as indeed in all polite society, but the New Dealers are themselves blacking it out.

Death Debate in Congress

by Adam Lapin

Cuba's First Negro Mayor

by Joseph North

Soviet-German Pact: One Year

by Joseph Starobin

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Between Ourselves

COOL breezes came our way this week and carried with them the indisputable truth that harvest time is nearly at hand. And indeed we have already begun to stack the sheaves of mail about the R. Palme Dutt series. This abundant crop produced, among others, a welcomed communication from a trade unionist in the West who says that he differed with NM in the past but that "it seems that you are gradually learning to put out a paper that is worthwhile reading. Your last two efforts have really surprised us. Those two articles of Palme Dutt and Alter Brody, taken together, are an excellent combination. Then Ruth McKenney with her sarcasm livens up your work and gives us something to laugh about. For your efforts in the right direction you will find a five buck bill just to show you that out here we don't ask something for nothing but that we are willing to pay for what we demand. . . ." (Incidentally, the business office tells us that copies of the issues containing the Dutt articles may be purchased for 10 cents.)

From far off Shanghai a Chinese University student wrote us this appealing letter: "I got your paper through a Foreign established library in Shanghai which ceased to furnish your News owing to the change of the situation in both the International Settlement and the French concession. This is a great affliction to me and forces me to separate from you. I am very disappointed and tried several times to subscribe one of yours which brings to me the confidence and the cheerfulness that a Marxist wants to have. But the condition is very difficult as caused by the change of the exchange rate between us. I shall nearly spend four Ch. $ for one copy which may support my life for one week. So here I sincerely beg you to send me your News free of charge, in exchanging for that I shall send you manuscripts to report the conditions in China to the readers of the USA." To which we are glad to agree.

Our editorial board reports that it has an excellent crop of good things for NM's readers. Top on the list at this moment are two articles by Corliss Lamont, which embody his replies to questions evoked by his recent series on how socialist planning would operate in the United States. The first of the series touches on unemployment, the small business man, the professional man, the farm problem, religious freedom, and what happens to surpluses under socialism.

Another interesting piece is Barbara Giles' exploration into the wilds of Walter Lippmannism, due next week. Samuel Sillen has just returned from Buffalo, where he attended the Teachers Union convention; he will bring his report to you in the next issue. Two noted Negro writers are also on our schedule—Ralph Ellison is recalling memories of 1917 with his study of the condition of the conscripted Negro soldier. John P. Davis, of the National Negro Congress, is reviewing Katherine DuPre Lumpkin's *The South in Progress*. And Gropper tells us he is revising and bringing up to date that famous double-spread which we published just about one year ago, the one which gives a bird's-eye view of the route taken by the locomotive of history—and what happens to those who fall off the train.

Just around the corner of September is the election campaign. Our correspondents are busy out-Galluping the doc and will soon bring you the facts of the campaign in all parts of the nation. Following NM's policy of analyzing the inner forces which guide public policy and opinion, we hope to bring fresh and important material to light concerning the course of the campaign in both of the old party camps of Roosevelt and Willkie and in the vigorous and stirring campaign which the Communist Party is waging for Earl Browder and James W. Ford.

One week from Friday, on September 6 to be exact, NM is holding its own exclusive weekend party at Chesters' Zunbarg, high in the mountains near Woodbourne, N. Y. This delightful resort has been reserved for NM readers and staff and a special committee has busily prepared for two days of recreation and entertainment. The $10 fee will admit you to forty-eight hours of fresh air, rest, sport, and a program which includes talented singers, dancers, and specialty artists from the rolls of TAC. A feature is to be a talk by Joseph North on his visits to Mexico and Cuba. James Dugan is to give his lecture on swing music—with illustrations. You may make reservations at Bookfair, 133 West 44th St., the Workers Book Shop, 50 East 13th St., and at NM's office.

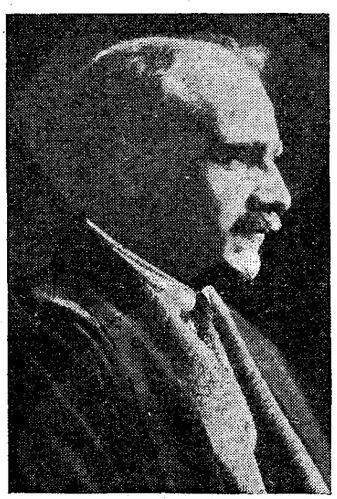
Regretfully we report that H. C. Adamson, who has handled publicity during the past sixteen months for NM, is leaving the staff. Happily, however, we note that Mr. Adamson is about to open his own office as public relations expert. We wish him much good fortune.

Who's Who

ADAM LAPIN is NM and *Daily Worker* correspondent in Washington. . . . Joseph Starobin is an editorial writer on NM, specializing in foreign affairs. . . . Jose Lizarraga is a Spanish journalist who knew Henri Barbusse personally. . . . Isidor Schneider is former literary editor of NM and author of *From the Kingdom of Necessity*. . . . Frank J. Wallace is a New York economist.

Flashbacks

A HINT of what can be done to the American people if the conscription bill passes was given on Sept. 2, 1921. That day federal troops entered West Virginia in a tense strike situation and simultaneously mine owners' airplanes bombed the striking miners. . . . August 30 marks the fifth anniversary of the death of Henri Barbusse, writer and world leader in the fight against war and fascism. . . . To the long list of violent and terroristic acts by counter-revolutionary forces one more was added Aug. 30, 1918. That day an attempt was made on the life of Lenin.



J. B. S. Haldane

Mr. Haldane, distinguished English biologist, continues, despite the war, his scientific research at his laboratory in University College, London. He also participates actively in English political life through his writing and by serving as chairman of the editorial board of the London "Daily Worker." Many weeks ago Mr. Haldane designed an air raid shelter, popularly known by his name, which was approved by the Air Ministry. These shelters can be erected rapidly and strengthened later to afford any protection desired. But as yet few of them have been built by the government, despite the obvious need. Among Mr. Haldane's more recent books are "The Adventures of a Biologist" and "Science and Everyday Life." His brilliant introduction to the recently published "Dialectics of Nature" by Friedrich Engels appeared in NM, May 28.

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NEW MASSES

VOLUME XXXVI SEPTEMBER 3, 1940 NUMBER 11

Zero Hour

A year ago FDR said, "There will be no blackout of peace in the United States." Today we are at the brink of war. The final decision rests with the people. An editorial article.

ONE year has passed since war was declared, the second great war of the century, the culmination of a decade of warfare, declared and undeclared, in one part and another of the globe. Millions of men and women who were promised one generation ago a new era of permanent peace have, together with the new generation, been sucked into the quicksands of this struggle. The lights have gone out everywhere in capitalist Europe. Like vampires, the bombing planes inherit the darkness.

Nobody can see the end of this struggle. Nobody thinks of the end any longer. On both sides, it has become a phantasmagoria —of slow, inexorable hunger, of attrition. London itself was bombed last week, followed by the bombardment of Berlin. The countryside of Europe has already been converted into the wasteland; now the mutual destruction of Europe's capitals returns the seats of Western civilization to the age of the Neanderthals. In his speech last week Churchill dispensed with the discussion of war aims altogether. His only pledge to the people of Britain is hardship and suffering, holding out the hope—not of the war's end —but of some vague beginning, perhaps in 1942, who knows?

According to the Quaker Relief Service, three million young people in France face starvation this winter. A generation is being born and may by sheer chance grow to manhood, deformed and misshapen, living monuments to the year 1940. Just as the German ruling class looted the resources and culture of the great German people, forcibly directing its energies to the purposes of destruction, so now this same ruling class, conquerors for the moment, loot the remainder of Europe. And while the people of Britain suffer ever shorter rations, maintaining contact with the rest of the world by a narrow thread of armed convoys, Mr. Churchill boasts that he is holding food in reserve, to be offered the peoples of Europe only in exchange for a British victory. The victory itself Mr. Churchill promises only in the dim, uncertain future, a promise which he can fulfill only by drawing another continent, with its quarter of a billion people, into the same vortex of violence and starvation. What a nightmare capitalism visits upon the human race as its crowning achievement!

One year ago, in his radio speech of Sept. 3, 1939, the President of the United States declared, "As long as it remains within my power to prevent it, there will be no blackout of peace in the United States." In that same address, he cautioned the American people "to discriminate most carefully between fact and rumor. Do not believe of necessity everything you hear and read." All during those months of last autumn and winter the tycoons of high finance, the owners of American industry, assured us that they disdained the profits of war: there would be no swing toward the production of war materials at the expense of the rest of the economy. There would be, they assured us, no profiteering. In the middle thirties Congress had passed legislation ensuring American neutrality in case of another war. No sooner did the war come but the administration abandoned *exactly those safeguards which were intended to keep us out of another conflict,* all the while alleging that we could be partial to one side in this conflict, and yet remain short of war itself.

Yes, that is where we are today—just short of war, *on the very brink of it.* Not only has "peace" become an offcolor word in the administration's vocabulary, as indeed in all polite society, but the New Dealers are themselves blacking it out. So far from distinguishing "most carefully between fact and rumor," the President himself considers it the last word in patriotism to spread the most alarming rumors. And anyone who scratches his head in simple disbelief has now, in terms of the latest analysis of all our troubles, become "soft" and "feminine." A tremendous spy scare has been generated throughout the country; the President has converted the ancient Biblical commandment, Love Thy Neighbor, into the modern "spy on thy neighbor." Three and a half million people, whose misfortune is that they have not yet taken out papers of citizenship in a country which once welcomed them with open arms, are being registered and fingerprinted this week. Public officials urge them not to worry: before long, they say, the rest of the people will be fingerprinted also!

So far from disdaining profits, the owners of American enterprise have diverted the nation's economy to the production of war materials—for both Britain and the United States. Production has zoomed to 1929 levels at least twice within the last year, without any evident effect on unemployment. The first hundred corporations to balance their books reported a 60.5 percent increase in profits in the first half of this year compared with the first half of 1939. Dividends of companies registered with the New York *Times* reached $1,781,986,809 in the first six months of 1940, almost $200,000,000 more than the corresponding period last year—$1,000,000 more per day. Big business is simply splashing around in the heady wine of a $14,000,000,000 arms budget, of which about half will be spent in the coming year. In the aircraft industry business is considered "only fair" unless net operating profits reach *20, 30, 40 percent* above 1939 levels. Only a little while ago the moguls of private enterprise made pilgrimages to the countryside in sackcloth and ashes because government intervention (to feed the unemployed) was wrecking our civilization. Now they decline to expand their facilities unless the Reconstruction Finance Corp. advances the money and assures them all sorts of interest-rate and tax concessions.

Last week the President of the United States virtually declared war by announcing the defensive agreement with Canada and the projected acquisition of British possessions in the hemisphere. Like everything else he has done in this year, these things have been arranged behind the backs of the people. No one knows what the President decided in his dining-car rendezvous with the prime minister of Canada; Mr. Churchill apparently knows more than the American people. No one knows the purpose or perspective of the new defense commission now meeting in Ottawa. There was once a time when the press raised a terrific hue and cry over the President's dictatorial powers; but when it comes to advancing the interests of American imperialism no one has yet challenged the executive license whereby the President has been running things without consulting Congress.

What does the agreement with Canada mean? Why are we leasing (for ninety-nine years, a life sentence) these bits of British soil? The men who rule America have struck a hard bargain, a shrewd bargain. They have for a whole year, and longer, encouraged their British brethren to fight on against Germany, while American business men have coined good dollars by Britain's battle, have steadily pushed ahead to oust the British from Latin American and other markets, and are now—at the moment of Britain's greatest difficulties—pressing hard to take over as much as the empire as they can, in anticipation

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of any eventuality. This is a keen, hardboiled policy, a predatory policy. The men who own and rule America fear the competition of their German brothers-under-the-skin; likewise they consider themselves the logical inheritors of the British empire. In the battle across the ocean they see the opportunity to weaken both the German and British imperialisms—and thereby emerge the supreme overlords, the responsible masters of the imperialist world. *"National defense" for them is simply the technique of ensuring the conditions of their class rule.* They are concerned, above all, with perpetuating the civilization that will give them cost-plus-10-percent.

CANADIAN ADVENTURE

Their interest in Canada arises out of the fact that four billion American dollars have been fastened on the economy of the Canadian people—more than is invested everywhere else in the hemisphere combined—$4,000,000,000 that daily drains the Canadian people of the fruits of their labor. Mutual defense of Canada is first of all the defense of American dollars. As for Latin America: last week John W. White reported to the New York *Times* from Montevideo, Uruguay, that last June "two secret emissaries from Washington [were] sent to Montevideo to discuss the details of military and naval assistance that the United States was offering to Uruguay. . . . These were Captain Spears and Colonel Wooten," who "after explaining . . . how far the United States government was ready to go in helping Uruguay against any present or future danger informally approached the question of establishing United States naval and air bases . . . to facilitate such cooperation. The Uruguayan committee . . . rejected the idea of United States bases, but . . . presented a counterproposal . . . that Uruguay was willing for naval and air bases to be established for the use of any countries belonging to the Pan-American Union." But, says the *Times* correspondent, "it is understood that the subject has been dropped since the United States found the Uruguayan proposals unacceptable." In other words, defense of the very important Plata River estuary, controlling the rich commerce to southern Brazil, to Argentina, to Uruguay and Paraguay could not be, in Washington's opinion, a matter for all the South American nations, but for the United States alone. No wonder that Mr. White elsewhere in this same dispatch asserts that "Uruguay's preference for Pan-American bases is due to a desire to surround the cession with the most secure possible guarantees against any possible political or even military domination of Uruguay by the United States."

This program of "national defense" is neither "national" nor "defense." It is not the nation which these gentlemen wish to defend. For what is the nation? This is the question which precedes all others and determines all answers. The nation embraces the common people of this country, the working people of hand and brain, in the field and factory and office, whose energy made possible the great industrial power which is America. The nation is the common people, those same people whose great achievements have been appropriated by a handful of powerful individuals, whose right to work has been placed at the mercy of the monopolists, whose liberties—and now, peace itself—are threatened by these same monopolists and their insatiable quest for world power. This is the nation of Carl Sandburg's Lincoln, the America of John Steinbeck's Joads, the democracy of Earl Robinson's Ballad.

And who has defended this America in the past? It was not Mr. Knudsen of General Motors, whose company spent hundreds of thousands of dollars, hired hundreds of spies to prevent the organization of the auto workers. It was not Mr. Stettinius of United States Steel, of the notorious House of Morgan. It was not Mr. Willkie, the utilities baron, nor Edgar Hoover, the Stork Club detective, nor was it, except for a brief era of dear dead days beyond recall, Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was the labor movement and its picket line, the farmer and his famous slogan, "My family has a first mortgage on my farm," that defended America in the past. In recent years it was the great organizational consciousness among middle class and professional people in unity with the labor movement: these were ever the first line of American defense. These forces alone can defend America now.

Is not America still in economic crisis after ten long years because the Knudsen and Stettinius crowd—the source of funds for all the alien-haters, the Red-baiters, the trade-union busters, the anti-Semites and vigilantes in American life—proved incapable of solving America's economic crisis? Are these not the same men, the class brothers of those who forced upon Germany the Frankenstein of Hitler, who betrayed France, persistently undermining her social fabric with the same corrosive hatred with which these same men once attacked the New Deal? Are these not the men who stabbed republican Spain in the back, and even now participate in the crucifixion of China (Chungking bombed for the thirty-fourth time last week) supporting Japan with American metals and American money? Why should we turn the defense of the common people over to these men? What have they done that America cannot possibly be defended without them?

Yes, NEW MASSES favors defense of the heritage of this country, favors realizing the American dream, favors defending to the last stand the living standards and liberties and future of the people. It is for this reason that national defense for us becomes not simply a matter of guns and tanks and naval bases: it is a question of policy, of political program.

That millions of people instinctively appreciate this truth is borne out by the remarkable fight against conscription. The President proposed the draft on June 20. A Republican and a renegade Democrat, both inveterate foes of everything progressive, prepared the bill. For almost ten weeks the army generals, the governors of many states, prominent churchmen, several stray ambassadors, infatuated liberals have hammered away for the passage of the draft. And still it has not passed.

Why? Because from deep down among the people there wells up the instinctive realization that in the hands of the army, in the hands of the buccaneers of Wall Street and Washington the draft is not a measure for national defense, but a measure for national deception and national degradation. It is a measure for the fascization of America—a bill that will deliver the nation, hogtied, into the hands of its traditional enemy.

In the language of the gutter press it is the Communists who are supposed to be sowing class discord: and yet here is a bill whose motives are purely the motives of the class struggle by the wealthy and powerful against the poor and the oppressed. The Communists are supposed to favor disorganization and confusion: but here is a bill that will disorganize and refashion American life beyond recognition, that will cut short every young person's career—for how long, who knows? That will reduce the standard of living by military decree to the munificent sum of $5 to $6 per week. How many men with families can live on that? Here is a bill which will place every young man at the mercies of a crowd of generals as far removed from the life and aspirations of the common people as were Francisco Franco and Queipo de Llano.

MILLIONS HAVE LEARNED

Instinctively, millions of people have reached this realization. And that is why the bill has made such sluggish progress in Congress. That is why both the President and his campaign rival have found it necessary to demand the passage of this bill without delay. Because they appreciate that the movement against the draft transcends all political parties, is greater than any party—and is being transformed in the crucible of this struggle into a political force of a new kind, a force that will threaten the jiujitsu hold which the old parties retain on American political life.

By the time these words are read there will be meeting in Chicago, the heart of the nation, the Emergency Peace Mobilization, a unique coming together of all the diverse forces in the labor movement, both AFL and CIO, the youth movement, the representatives of the farms and churches, and the twelve million Negro people, who suffer a double discrimination in both peace and war. It is only a healthy sign that the press cannot find any language to describe this movement other than by calling it "Communist or Communist-inspired." It is a sign of how deep are the roots which this movement has struck, how much feared is its message by the forces that insist upon war. And by the same token it is a sign of how valuable and necessary is its message for the great many-millioned folk in whose action lies, even yet, the power to keep us at peace. The defense of America lies with the men and women at Chicago. Only by their courageous action will the future of America, the great promise of it, survive.

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Meet Cuba's First Negro Mayor

The aristocrats of Bacardi Rum threw thousands of dollars into reaction's war chest to defeat Justus Salas, Negro candidate. Joseph North tells how the people won. Lesson for America.

Santiago de Cuba.

THE aristocrats of Bacardi Rum—"famous the world over"—rule the industrial roost here. The family that has distilled the sugars of the island into one of the biggest fortunes in the country, threw $35,000 into Santiago's municipal campaign. If you know Cuba at all, you know what $35,000 means in this impoverished nation. For one of the most desperately contested campaigns in history was held here in July, one most memorable in Cuba's history.

The island's Negroes were fighting to come into their own, and this city's Chamber of Commerce couldn't sleep nights thinking of the possibility of the Negroes winning out. The latter, 70 percent of the city and the province of which it is the capital, were determined to elect their candidate to the mayoralty post. That man is Justus Salas, a Negro, the candidate of the Communist Party and the Liberal Party. The Bacardi–Chamber of Commerce crowd sought to transform the election into a "Black-White" fight. Reaction battled under the slogan "Keep the Negro Out." They built a "White Front" for their purposes, attempted to cleave the combination of black and white, to set them off against each other in the time-honored manner, and thus to continue maintenance of power.

They failed. Their defeat, and the success of the people, black and white, in choosing their candidate as chief executive of Cuba's second city, is one of the great popular achievements in the July 14 elections. It should have reverberations all over America—particularly in the United States where fifteen million Negroes seek political equality against a swarm of obstacles, poll tax, terrorism, all the devices well known to every American voter. A picture of what happened in Santiago will afford a picture of Cuba, generally, in the past great election campaign.

SANTIAGO

Santiago lies at the other end of the island, away from the United States. It is redolent with the tradition of 1898, and San Juan Hill (remember TR and his Rough Riders?) lies nearby. It is one of the oldest cities of America, runs uphill and down along the waterfront, and has a population of 150,000. The sun burns overhead but the surrounding province, Oriente, is one of the most beautiful parts of the world. The green of the rich fields intoxicates the eye; rich, tropical fruits, the mangoes, the bananas, are gold against the green. The canebrakes seem greener here, the sky bluer, the cows fatter than any place on the island. And the people poorer. The traveler finds it hard to believe hunger reigns in a land so rich. There is something outrageously obscene, infinitely tragic, to see starvation rampant in a countryside where seed sprouts riotously from a marvelously fertile soil. That, of course, is the saga of capitalism and of imperialism. But here, in sweet Oriente, it screams at you. You see the whole brutal business before your eyes.

Santiago, Oriente's capital, is rich in tradition of national struggle. Cuba's George Washington, the beloved Maceo, comes from here, and many fighters for independence began their labors in this city. But today the city is rundown, poor, the streets unpaved, the sewage running in the gutters, the people burning up with fever, the inhabitants walking the steaming streets jobless. Of Santiago's 22,000 industrial workers, seven thousand have jobs. The other fifteen thousand have no idea where their next meal is coming from. There is no unemployment insurance, no measure to alleviate hunger. Families double up with relatives, sharing their poor crust of bread. As Councilman-elect Juan Faguechel, president of the Longshoremen and Stevedores Union, told me: "We eat catch-as-catch-can. I get three afternoons' work a week. I have my wife and own children to support. In addition, when the United Fruit mill shut down last year, it chased everybody off its property, put a barbed wire fence around its land. My mother, brother, and two sisters who lived there came to live with me and my family. What we have we share. A little potatoes, rice, and beans. Once a week, some fish. Hungry most of the time. When we have a dime, we eat a dime's worth. When we have a quarter, we eat a quarter's worth. No regular amount, no regular diet. No calories," he added with a wry smile. President of one of the biggest unions in town, Faguechel shares his job on the waterfront with his colleagues. The poor are truly the world's generous. "Ten years ago," he said, "I was strong, husky, had an appetite like a bull. Today, if you invited me out to a square meal, I'd get sick. My stomach," he said ruefully, "has shrunk." Faguechel, like most of Oriente, is Negro.

In fact, Santiago is 70 percent Negro. Ever since the country won its sovereignty from Spain the Negroes have sought greater political power. But they won little success, even though many of the greatest warriors for independence were Negroes or mulattoes. The descendants of the Spanish grandees saw to that. They divided the whites from the Negroes and, with their overwhelmingly superior economic power, kept the colored population from gaining any degree of political power approximate to the size of their population. In fact, as Faguechel told me, dark-skinned Santiagans were not permitted in the city park as recently as a year ago. Even today, Negroes cannot find work in the city's stores or in the restaurants. Discrimination is quieter, more subtle, than it is in the United States, but it is there, despite the provision of the 1940 constitution making it a crime. It remains one of the major battles of the progressives.

The elections of July 14 were held under these circumstances. The Communist Party, the only political grouping that has absolutely no race barriers, grew to be the first party of Santiago during the course of the campaign for the Constitutional Assembly where the constitution of 1940 was outlined. Its members felt—as Cesar Vilar, its leader in the province, told me—that the Negroes should have proper representation in the government of the city, as well as the island. The Communists, therefore, approached the Liberal Party of the area on this issue. The Liberal leaders were decidedly averse to running a Negro candidate for mayor: but the Liberals had a strong section of Negro members and progressive whites in their ranks. They hearkened to the proposals of the Communists. The combined pressure overcame the resistance of the anti-Negro bloc within that party.

PEOPLE'S CANDIDATE

The next problem was to find a candidate who would command the confidence of the city's masses, black and white. Justus Salas was considered. He is a man of forty-four, with twenty years' experience in the Liberal Party ranks. He held a number of subordinate political positions previously and has won a reputation for probity. He is perhaps the most outstanding figure in the Negro community in Santiago. He had acted as secretary of the City Council—an appointive position—under the previous mayor, Dr. Juan F. Castelbi, and had resigned within a month because of the corruption he saw and to which he refused to be partner. Furthermore, he was a Catholic, a not unimportant factor in this generally Catholic community.

The battle lines were drawn. The Liberal Party, despite a certain chauvinistic section that covertly campaigned against it, agreed to Sr. Salas as the joint candidate of the Communists and their own party. The opposition combined their forces against the popular candidate. They used every possible device to defeat him. They failed in their attempt to split white and black. Then they began to Red-bait—an international device. Their campaign literature charged the Communists with "ungodliness," but that failed when the Catholic Salas made the rounds of the city's religious organizations, spoke to the sacerdotes, the priests in the lower categories, convinced them of his sincerity and that of his backers.

The Spanish Chamber of Commerce threw $50,000 ($35,000 of it from Bacardi Rum) into the campaign against him. They thundered in their press and over the radio. But

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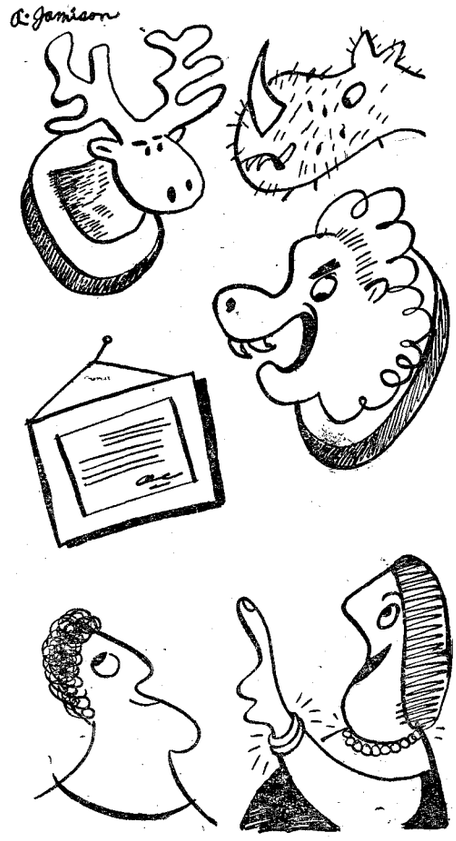
the Salas adherents had drawn up a program that appealed to the masses of people—the vast majority of them hungry. They demanded a change in the dirty, unsanitary conditions of the city. They demanded, improvement in the status of local industry, better conditions for the native small industrialists and business men. They appealed in their program for definite improvement in the status of the middle class, as well as the proletariat, black and white. Chiefly, of course, they grappled with the most burning issue, joblessness. Mayor-elect Sr. Salas told me: "Our most immediate problem is unemployment. Of course we cannot get to the bottom of this question at once, for it is more than a local problem. But we plan to pass a series of measures that will ensure work for the jobless—public works, etc. The long-range solution is one that the federal government, with aid from local municipalities such as ours, will discover. We look to Batista's program to tackle this question, nationally, fundamentally, but in the meanwhile we will adopt measures to alleviate this situation as quickly as it is humanly possible."

THE HIERARCHY

On election morning, July 14, the hierarchy of the church had gathered all its followers at six o'clock mass, lectured them on the evils of choosing Sr. Salas as their candidate—urged them to unite against the "godless Reds." The church authorities exhorted them to go to the polls as soon as they opened and to cast their votes against Salas and Beelzebub. The other parties ganged up on the popular candidate. They lavished funds, scoured the wards to buy up votes. The Communists went through the streets with banners: "Jail for the vote-buyers." They applied popular pressure against the previous, generally accepted corrupt election practices. The other parties bought up as many ballots as they could, participated in not-so-secret horse-trading of votes. (The fascist ABC candidate for mayor got three thousand additional votes this way.) The principal reactionary parties put up a terrific campaign to befuddle the issues, to buy the election. These were Grau San Martin's "Autentico" Party, which once commanded a considerable following among professionals, white collar sectors, but which was now in a relatively weakened status owing to factional fights; the historically reactionary Republican Action Party, the fascist ABC, admittedly pro-Franco; and Menocal's Democratic-Republican Party, spokesman for the Cuban landowners and a part of the more well-to-do peasantry.

Tactics at the polls were similar to occurrences elsewhere throughout the island. The opposition parties nationally used all sorts of tricks, from expelling watchers of the popular parties, to jockeying them into tasks of tabulating the votes so that they could not supervise the count. In Bariay, Oriente Province, for example, special police of the sugar companies kept all known followers of the Communist Party from entering the polling booths.



A. Jamison

". . . and this is his first yellow-dog contract."

In the sugar areas, for instance at the Francisco sugar mill in Camaguey Province, thirty Communists couldn't get to the polls because armed groups prevented their getting off the trains. At other polls in the sugar area the foremen stood at the doors threatening the voters with loss of their jobs if they didn't vote for the candidates of reaction.

Nonetheless, despite certain mistakes made in the campaign by the Communists, they won important victories throughout the nation, as well as in Oriente. In the latter province, in addition to electing Justus Salas they won five municipal councilors. They elected eight to ten representatives to the House of Representatives in Havana, and from seventy to eighty municipal and provincial councilors. They proved themselves worthy sons of the old fighters for Cuban independence, the true descendants of Maceo and Marti, and the masses knew it.

The progressives, generally, swept the island. Batista, running on a program which in the main corresponded to the will of the people, won a two-to-one victory over his rival, Grau San Martin.

THE JOB AHEAD

I will leave for a later article the national political scene, but it is certain that the masses generally, quite in agreement with Batista's stated aims and happy over the gains made at the Constitutional Assembly last year, are waiting to see how those stated aims will be worked out. Meanwhile they trust chiefly in their own powers of organization and are quite determined to cede no ground. The job now, in Oriente as well as elsewhere, is to see to it that the specific gains guaranteed by the constitution are translated into reality. Definite headway is being made, but no slack dare be permitted. They have won constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, press, and assembly. They are supposed to get paid holidays and vacations with pay. Racial discrimination is a crime. The farmers—Cuba's greatest problem as it is in all colonial and semi-colonial lands—have won some measure of surcease: they cannot be foreclosed for the next two years while measures are being formulated to regain farmlands now in the hands of foreign interests. (United States interests own 80 percent of the countryside.) Mortgage interest rates are reduced to a maximum of 3½ percent. Mortgages can be paid off in periods of as long as twenty years.

Batista has promised to see these things through—these measures and other progressive planks. He spoke up against the imperialist war; at Havana he took a bold step, in spite of Yankee pressure, and urged the complete independence of the European colonies.

Meanwhile the people of Cuba look to the anti-imperialist masses of America to support their fight. I got this most graphically at Santiago when I attended a fiesta of the Bacardi workers. They were having one of their traditional masquerade dances in the outskirts of the city. Their organizer invited me there to talk with some of the workers. They were dancing a native *conga,* in which they snake through the room out onto the lawn, chanting an ancient, native chant. (Not hunger, or exploitation, can break the spirit of these workers. Their will to live cannot be defeated.)

MESSAGE FOR AMERICA

When they learned that a progressive newspaperman from America was among them, several of the masqueraded workers came over and gave me the story of Bacardi, his speedup and his low wages. "If you tell Americans about that," they said, "they will surely force Sr. Bacardi to improve our conditions. The Cuban bosses are afraid of the American people. Be sure and put in your paper how they enslave us, keep us hungry. Let the Americans understand that when they drink a Cuba Libre with Bacardi rum in it, they drink a false drink. It is not Cuba Libre. It is Cuba in slavery."

The trust this Cuban worker had in the power of the American people is general throughout organized labor in the country. From their own experience, they know there are two classes in all countries: in Santiago Bacardí taught them that. They know that the imperialists exploit their own people as well as those in foreign lands. And their hatred of such monopolies as Electric Bond & Share and National City Bank does not spill over into dislike against the American people as a nation.

JOSEPH NORTH.

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Death Debate in Congress

The apostles of militarizing America are racing against time to put over the draft bill. The longer the debate continues, the stronger the anti-conscription forces become.

Washington, D. C.

THIS week, beginning August 26, is decisive in the Senate debate on the conscription bill. Administration leaders are making every effort to force a vote before the week is over. For those who favor a peacetime draft it is now or never. As President Roosevelt told his press conference last Friday, time is of the essence.

Less than ten weeks have elapsed since the Burke-Wadsworth bill was introduced on June 20, a very short legislative history indeed for a measure of such tremendous importance. But it is far too long for the bill's proponents. It was clear from the beginning that steamroller tactics were needed if the bill was going to be passed at all. And this was the original plan—to rush it through in a week or two as just another "national defense" bill which only a small handful of courageous dissenters could afford to oppose; to get it over and done with while Congress and the nation were still dazed by the armaments appropriations of billions upon billions.

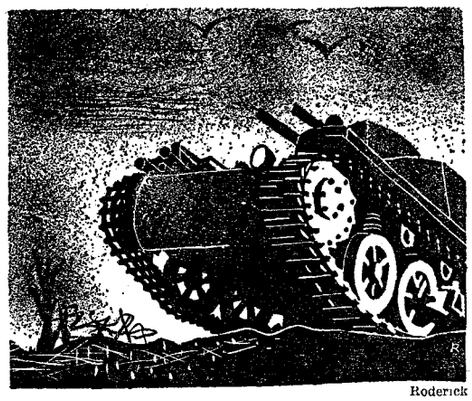
Already the steamroller is dangerously behind schedule. Any further delay will be fatal. Within the few weeks that the Burke bill has been debated an understanding of what conscription means in terms of bringing fascism to America has grown among the people. This understanding will continue to grow. Besides, who knows what changes, what shifts may take place in the international situation? A sudden turn in events may be unfavorable from a propaganda viewpoint for the apostles of militarizing American life. Right now the President's terrifying picture of imminent invasion still grips the minds of millions. Who can tell at what point the hypnosis will wear off? Certainly the facts that are leaking out about the sitdown strike of the munitions makers do not increase popular enthusiasm.

Franklin Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie understand all this; that is why they have been putting on the heat. They both want conscription. It is the ultimate product of their "national unity" and "preparedness" program. They know that the President who is armed with the Burke bill will hold a greater club over the heads of the American people than any of his predecessors. They know they must move fast if either one of them is to get it.

The New York *Times,* organ of the conscriptionists, has been quick these last few days to see the importance of speed. It was the *Times* which started the conscription headlines. The President promptly endorsed its editorial on the subject. Col. Julius Ochs Adler, manager of the *Times,* has been taking time off from his job to manage the subscription drive for the Plattsburg boys. It was the New York *Times* which began to shout filibuster when the steamroller in the Senate failed to move on time. And strangely enough, it was Charles Hurd of the New York *Times* who, on orders from his home office, asked President Roosevelt last Friday the question which drew FDR's obviously prepared statement on the necessity for immediate action.

It was the time element which compelled the President to come out against the Maloney amendment. Of course this proposal is essentially the same as the Burke bill. It would simply postpone actual drafting of men until after the elections. But the President was apparently afraid to take the risk that in the intervening months popular sentiment might rise high enough to prevent the new Congress from appropriating funds for operating the draft.

There is another reason why the Maloney amendment involves risk. It provides a three-month trial period for voluntary enlistments. The President and the supporters of the Burke bill are scared of that trial period. It is true that the brass hats in the War Department can be counted on to do everything possible to discourage voluntary enlistments. But there is still a danger that they will not be able to stop sincere young men, who believe President Roosevelt when he tells them that their country is in imminent danger, from offering their services to the army. The army has been rejecting an unusually large number of applicants for minor physical ailments. The brass hats are considerably less eager to raise the $21 a month pay for privates than to appear before congressional committees demanding a relaxation of profit restrictions on the armaments program. In order to misrepresent the facts, they have even gone to the extent of ripping two pages out of 27,000 copies of the official recruiting news because they contained statistics about the rapid rate of enlistments. Nevertheless they have not succeeded in slowing up voluntary enlistments. All their quotas for volunteers are being filled and exceeded. The June quota was filled on June 25—a week ahead of schedule. In July, 34,058 young men applied. After the army rejected 10,626 there were still 23,432 left.



Roderick

As a result of the President's statement, the Maloney amendment has probably been killed. The strength of the amendment has been the support of the Senate straddlers. It was ideally suited for a professional fence sitter like Senator Vandenberg, who wanted to take a mild stand against conscription without antagonizing Secretary of the Navy Knox and other close friends who are for it. And it was just as useful for men like Senators Mead and Wagner, who wanted to take a mild stand.

The President has made the position of the Wagners and the Meads untenable. He, the President, is trying to force a showdown on the Burke bill itself at a time when the supporters of conscription appear to have a slight edge. Of course they no longer have the overwhelming margin which was theirs when the issue was first raised. However, they have overcome much of the panic which seized them when the anti-conscription mail started pouring in on Congress two or three weeks ago. They now appear to have about two or three votes more than the foes of the bill. The situation is fluid, of course. It may change before the vote takes place in the Senate, and certainly before it takes place in the House; but at the moment the conscriptionists are at the peak of their strength as a result of the concerted press campaign for the bill and the stand taken by the two major party candidates. All they lack is popular support.

And this is just what has been the mainstay of the movement against conscription. The anti-conscription bloc in the Senate has obvious shortcomings. It is certainly a diversified group, lacking unity and clarity of perspective. It numbers among its leaders outstanding and courageous men like Senators Norris and Wheeler. But it includes a man like Rush Holt who has been repudiated by the mine workers of West Virginia for his anti-labor stand and contact with the Coughlinites.

The simple fact of the matter is that there is as yet no genuine peace bloc in Congress. So the real source of strength of the drive against conscription has come from the organizations of the people like the CIO, the Farmers Union, the Railroad Brotherhoods, and many religious denominations. It is this mass support which has given the anti-conscription group in Congress its inspiration—and the votes of many senators. And it is on the extent and organization of this mass support that the future of the conscription bill depends. There is enough of that support, if it is organized, to kill the bill. At this writing, pressure has forced demagogic modifications, such as the limitation to 900,000 trainees annually. But President Roosevelt was right when he insisted that time is of the essence. That holds doubly true for those who are fighting conscription.

ADAM LAPIN.

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The Non-Aggression Pact: One Year

"The charges of September and October a year ago have failed to withstand the test of this year's events," writes Joseph Starobin. An analysis of twelve months of the treaty.

Is it really difficult for these gentlemen to understand the purpose of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact, on the strength of which the USSR is not obliged to involve itself in war either on the side of Great Britain against Germany or on the side of Germany against Great Britain? Is it really difficult to understand that the USSR is pursuing and will continue to pursue its own independent policy, based on the interests of the peoples of the USSR and only their interests?—*Molotov, speech to the Supreme Soviet, Aug. 31, 1939.*

It goes without saying that . . . Russian activity is not in the interests of the Nazis or the British. The one certainty amid many uncertainties is that Soviet power works only for itself. In the rear-guard of the opposing fronts, it marches alone.—*Editorial, New York "Times," July 31, 1940.*

IT TOOK the New York *Times* exactly eleven months to admit what those Americans who read Premier Molotov's speech learned exactly one week after the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact was signed. I use the word "admit" because we cannot assume that the editors of the *Times* are mere sluggards, suffering from delayed-reaction reflexes. We must assume that the *Times* begrudges the USSR her independence, and felt compelled to deny it to its readers for almost a year. Yet in this one word "independence" lies the simplest and briefest explanation for the pact. It could not have been otherwise for the first socialist republic. In a hostile world, now shattering itself in the most barbaric hostilities of history, the first working class state must of necessity take advantage of every antagonism, every changing alignment in the outer world, but always within the ramifications of its independence, within the limits of its responsibility as the vanguard of the world movement for socialism. Twenty-three years of Soviet policy have proved the wisdom of this principle. So have the terrible events of the terrible year that has passed.

Every one of the charges and criticisms of September and October a year ago has failed to withstand the test of this year's events. Indeed, the events have not only contradicted those charges but hurled them back into the faces of their makers with a terrible force and fierce irony—in much less than eleven months.

THE "DEMOCRACIES"

Take, for example, the thesis that the USSR "betrayed the democracies" by signing her non-aggression pact with Germany. Everyone knows today that there were no obligations between the USSR and the Allies. Millions of Frenchmen and Britons now appreciate from their own experience whose fault it was that no such obligations existed, realizing today that such obligations, if genuine and reciprocal, might have prevented the war. Let it be remembered that at Munich France virtually nullified her treaty of mutual assistance with the USSR; that Britain's motive in selling Czechoslovakia down the river was to break the Czech bonds with the USSR and isolate both countries before Hitler's drive. Even after the march on Prague, every Soviet initiative for genuine and effective obligations between the USSR and the Allied powers was rebuffed; Soviet proposals were considered "premature," were answered with equivocation and deceit all the while that deeds of appeasement and preparations for war betrayed every profession of collective security and peace. The thesis of betrayal is the essence of hypocrisy. Only six months earlier, on Dec. 6, 1938, the French republic signed a treaty of non-aggression with Germany, the fruits of which lie rotting in the summer sun. The President of the United States himself on April 15, 1939, offered the Germans the rim of the moon if they would pledge non-aggression for "ten, perhaps twenty-five years." In truth, does not the history of the past twelve months abound with betrayals among the so-called democratic nations themselves? Did not the Allies betray their pledge to Poland last September in the fatuous hope that the German blitzkrieg might continue to roll toward the Soviet plains? Did not the Finns complain, oh so bitterly, last March that they had been left out on a limb? Does not Churchill still bewail the perfidy of the Belgian king? Did not the British evacuate France, leaving her exposed on the eve of catastrophe, only to find themselves in a similar position two weeks later?

Or consider the thesis that the existence of the non-aggression pact has somehow made socialism indistinguishable from fascism. So far as is known, the ghetto-ridden Rumanian Jews have not been clamoring to cross the Danube into German Austria. And when Herr Hitler three weeks ago awarded Herr Krupp, that proletarian armaments magnate, a medal as "the first pioneer of German labor," no correspondent of the New York *Times* scooped the world by proving this was really the Order of Lenin. Seriously speaking, the truth is that the democratic capitalisms, rather than the USSR, have in this year become increasingly indistinguishable from fascism itself. Whatever remains of democratic liberties, of living standards, of science and culture and human dignity, is everywhere coming under the iron heel. Not merely in the belligerent countries, but in the United States, where the most rapid fascization of American life has become the main preoccupation of the administration, as well as the avowed promise of Mr. Willkie, who will "outdistance Hitler"—yes, in "the American way."

It has been alleged, and still is, that by signing the pact the USSR provoked the war and is presumably responsible for it. Again, the logic of the mirror manipulators! For if Herr Hitler felt himself ready for war only after securing his eastern frontier, it follows that his real purpose in so doing was to attack the West. And if the French and British tories deliberately avoided guarantees of mutual security with the USSR in the hope that Hitler might be beguiled into violating the Soviet western borders, it follows that they feared Hitler and hoped to deflect his assault from themselves. Obviously, it is in the realm of Hitler's ambitions and real intentions, in the realm of Britain's real fears and frustrations that the origin and guilt of this war lies. The war originates in the last war, in the peace of Versailles, and the breakdown of that ignoble peace, on which the Soviet peoples were never consulted. More fundamentally, the war arises out of that remorseless struggle for colonial markets and raw materials, for the dominion over weaker peoples—all of which passes for civilization in the language of imperialism, a language which the USSR understands but which is foreign to it.

TRADE RELATIONS

To begin with, Soviet trade with Germany represents only a fraction of German world trade: in 1938 German world imports were valued at a bit more than 6,000,000,000 marks; whereas the 1939 Soviet-German trade agreement provides for a credit of only 200,000,000 marks—one-thirtieth as much. Even if it is assumed that German imports had fallen to half their value (the exact figures are not available) since the war began, the percentage of trade with the Soviet Union makes it clear that it must be Germany's own resources, her loot in Europe, and her trade with the capitalist world which keeps Hitler going. Second, the USSR has always proclaimed the principle of "strengthening business relations with all countries" irrespective of ideological differences—a natural and necessary principle for the first workers' state, the same principle which underlies the recent Soviet-American trade agreement. In April 1935 fascist Germany herself extended a 200,000,000 mark credit to the USSR which did not prevent the French republic from concluding its mutual assistance pact with the USSR one month later. This whole rumpus over trade merely conceals the fact that the British and French empires were for years the source of Germany's economic and military rearmament, that as late as 1938 these empires were supplying Germany with 26 percent of her iron ore, 33 percent of her lead, 50 percent of her chromium, 61 percent of her manganese, 62 percent of her copper, 52 percent of her rubber, 60 percent of her zinc, and 94 percent of her nickel. And this

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trade with the enemy continued even after the formal declaration of war: witness the passage of Ruhr coal to France and Lorraine iron to Germany through Belgium; witness the extensive Allied commerce with Italy; and observe that American trade with the neutral nations surrounding Germany approached a very substantial figure until Italy's belligerency cut that source of profit in June. Only people who are themselves violently unneutral can find fault with the Soviet Union's neutral effort to trade with both sides.

BRITISH EMPIRE

And what of the notion that the USSR and Germany are engaged in undermining that "incredibly delicate and exquisite mechanism, this remarkably artistic thing" (as Dorothy Thompson puts it), the British empire? Have not the most recent events made clear that the empire is really being divided between the axis powers, Britain's former friends, and the United States, Britain's present friend-in-need? Did not Washington give notice at Havana that it would take over the British possessions in this hemisphere, following which it has put the squeeze play on Canada and notified whomsoever it may concern that Wall Street considers itself the legitimate heir of the tottering domain? Unless Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania should really have been considered British dominions after all, it can hardly be said that the federation of socialist nations has made progress at British expense. And if, as we are confident, the disintegration of the empire results, not in an exchange of imperialist masters, but in the liberation of the colonial peoples and the Britons themselves—it can be wagered that Adolf Hitler will not be congratulating Joseph Stalin in testimony of their collaboration.

Looking backward, how shall we appraise that snarling anger, that animal fury which swept through the editorial offices, the academic corridors, the broadcasting studios, cafes, and boudoirs of the imperialist world? Basically, this was a confession of fear, an admission of guilt. Fear there was of Hitler for having asserted his defiance of erstwhile friends (who had held such high hopes for him), fear of Hitler's power which they had themselves encouraged. Rage there was against the USSR—and her leaders—for having dared to defend the interests of the Soviet people even against its most ferocious neighbor, fury over the calm assurance of her manner, the independence of her policies. And in their anger against the Communists the liberal and socialist folk disclosed their own guilt for sabotaging peace. In their miserable phrase "communazi," they concealed their own complicity with fascism. In their high moral pretense they justified in advance their own leap to the bandwagon of the warmakers, the men who now wish to drench in blood the world they made.

ORIGINS OF THE PACT

The origins of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact lie in the post-Munich period. The evidence we have is circumstantial, but this much seems clear: that while the USSR was isolated and threatened in September 1938, the Munich partners were led by the dialectic of their conflicting ambitions to jockey for Soviet support in May. The British purpose was to employ the threat of an alliance with Moscow in order to retain the fast-slipping grip on Germany, to humbug public opinion at home while preparations intensified —not for the preservation of peace, but for a new Munich or else war. The German strategy, as we see it now with the help of the French Yellow Book, was largely the mirror

Fred Ellis

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image of the British. The Nazis offered a new trade agreement and held out the possibility of a non-aggression agreement to plumb the progress of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations. They hoped to intimidate Poland; they speculated that the British would be so appalled by the prospect of the pact (the Yellow Book proves the British and French foreign offices knew about it as early as May) that appeasement might yet be facilitated. Or failing that, the Nazis intended to make war in the West without facing war in the East.

It is generally recognized now that the Munich conference marked the breakdown of the Versailles era. Less than a year after Munich the struggle for the redivision of the imperialist world resumed—apparently where it had last left off. But the Soviet-German pact was an obituary to the Versailles era in a different sense than Munich. For was not the Versailles era a continual effort on the part of the victorious Versailles powers, Britain especially, to harass, embarass, undermine, and ultimately destroy that new world which was born in the fires of the last world war? If so, what the USSR accomplished by the pact was the smashing—shall we hope for all time?—of the persistent strivings of world imperialism for an anti-Soviet crusade.

The pact signified, first, that Britain and France had failed to offer terms of mutual security to the USSR. Second, that both sides —Germany and the Allies—preferred a showdown of their relative strengths. Third, that such a showdown, in the deliberate abstention of the USSR, could only be a continuation of the last war. Finally, the pact was a way of telling the world that in such a war—an imperialist war—the same people who had taken the first steps to end the last slaughter were now taking the first steps to stay out of this slaughter. It was always possible to betray collective security in two ways: either by appeasement, the method of Munich, the stimulation of vaster fascist appetites and most certain disaster; or else by war itself. Maintaining the continuity of her policy under new conditions, the USSR refrained from war without appeasing fascism.

THREE PERIODS

In the development of the pact thus far three periods can be distinguished. In the first months the USSR accomplished by her treaty with Germany at least one of the things she desired to do by a treaty of quite a different kind with the Allies—the security of her western frontier. The Germans were evidently prepared to do in August what the British and French had declined to do since March. After the clarification of frontier in former Poland, the Baltic German ruling classes in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were uprooted by Hitler himself; the USSR regained strategic access to the Baltic Sea of which the Soviet peoples had been robbed by both Brest-Litovsk and Versailles. In this first phase the USSR disillusioned every effort to alienate her relations with Germany, refusing for example to associate herself through Turkey with the Allied intentions in the Near East. And since the war had not yet really begun, Molotov emphasized in his speech of Oct. 31, 1939, "our readiness to support Germany's effort for peace."

All this culminated, and was transformed, in the episode of Finland. The Finnish war was really the severest test of the Soviet-German pact. If one rereads the speeches of Soviet statesmen in the years before August, there's no doubt that they considered Finland a source of German as well as British intrigue —in fact, an avenue of Anglo-German collaboration. Evidently the fascists had written Finland off, however reluctantly; but the Allies, and their mentors in Washington, the Vatican, and the Socialist International saw an opportunity in Soviet discussions with Finland to achieve that noble purpose which had been dashed five months before. They hoped to create a chain of circumstances which might yet persuade the Nazis to turn against the USSR. It will be recalled with what breathless anticipation the press greeted random reports that friends of General Goering were assisting the Finns. The bright young men of fortune in the State Department evidently assured the President of the United States that Soviet-German relations were so tenuous that Sumner Welles might perhaps snap them.

In retrospect, therefore, Finland was a probe of German intentions, a measure of how deep were the antagonisms in the imperialist world. And if the Allied plan had succeeded, the non-aggression pact could not have survived. But Finland was a test of the pact in still another sense. For if the Allies had declared war against Soviet Russia last December, at the same time failing to draw Germany to their side, a situation would have developed in which Germany and the USSR might have been at war with the same powers.

By bringing the Finnish events to their dramatic conclusion the USSR not only secured her immediate objectives, the relative security of her frontier and access to the Baltic, but also clarified relations with both imperialist camps. To the Allies, the last hope of "switching the war" disappeared. They would now have to face alone the consequences of their own long, shameful past. To Germany, the Finnish peace meant that the pact was an agreement for non-aggression, not an agreement for mutual assistance. The USSR was going to stay out of war, as Molotov repeated on March 29.

Within fourteen days the war had spread to Norway and Denmark; within two months to the Low Countries and France. Thus opens the third phase in the history of the pact, a phase in which we are now living. As for the future, insofar as the Soviet Union is the controlling factor, it is evident that she desires the continuation of non-aggressive relations with Germany and is ever ready to expand mutually profitable commerce. Molotov rejected in his recent address all attempts to "intimidate us with the prospect of the growth of Germany's might," which obviously applies to such intimidations from whatever direction they may come.

What we have learned from the past will be valid for the future. The cornerstone of Soviet policy in a world "that is pregnant with surprises" remains its independence, its military and economic strength, the moral and political unity of the sixteen socialist republics within its borders. Whatever confusions there were among honest people when the locomotive of history pounded round a corner (and most of us shared this confusion for longer than we could afford) arose out of an inadequate understanding of the independence of Soviet policy in all the phases of its development. Misconception of the character of the war arose from that older misconception of the principles of collective security. Collective security was actually betrayed as much by those forces who chose war as by those forces who chose appeasement in dealing with fascism. The peoples of the USSR discharged their great responsibility to the working class of other countries and to the rest of progressive humanity by showing the third alternative.

THE THIRD ALTERNATIVE

The third alternative either to the appeasement of fascism or to war remains the independent struggle of the working people and their friends among the farmers and middle class people, united against the ambitions of our own ruling class. It is the difficult alternative, the alternative of unremitting effort, devotion, and self-sacrifice—but the only one that stands the chance of spiking the juggernaut of American fascism as it prepares to extend its sway and power in combat with its European blood brother. There are indeed allies in this struggle—allies to be helped and allies who will help us, far more trustworthy than the ruling class of France, far more powerful than the ruling class of Britain. These are the common people of every land, the citizens of the Latin American nations, the federated peoples of the Soviet republics. Is it not clear that the policy of antagonism and bad faith to the USSR has brought the peoples of France and Britain to their present disaster and dilemma? Is it not doubly clear that in the fraternal collaboration of the American people and the peoples of the USSR, each acting upon their aroused energies and resources, lies the guarantee of our liberties, our peace, our future? JOSEPH STAROBIN.

America's War Casualties

THE suicide rate in Westchester County, N. Y., increased 85 percent the first five months of this year over the average rate for 1935-39. Two-thirds of the victims were foreign born or children of foreign born parents, 17 percent of German or Austrian descent. The Westchester County Health Department, which announced the suicide increase, was reported by the New York *Times* of June 26 to be wondering whether it is "associated with events in Europe." What about events in this country—such as registering, fingerprinting, and hounding "aliens"?

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Strictly Personal
by RUTH McKENNEY

Unpleasant Memories

THE 1940 election campaign, currently getting under way, fills me with a gentle nostalgia. The great Willkie-Roosevelt contest reminds me strongly, to be specific, of the glorious October I served, at a whole buck a day, as fourth assistant ward-heeler for Mr. C. James McGinty (Rep.). For Mr. McGinty was out, with blood in his eye and thunder in his mouth, to unseat the Cleveland, O., city record chief, a certain low dog of a fellow named John J. Farrel (Dem.).

Of course I got in on the campaign under false pretenses. Mr. McGinty's manager, Pete Jones, labored under the delusion that I was a female voter, the mother of two. Actually I was only fifteen years old, and although big for my age, I still wore pigtails. But my Aunt Kate wangled me onto Mr. McGinty's payroll and persuaded my Aunt Maggie to impersonate me on paydays.

My duties were simple but exciting. I used to rush home from high school, change my middy blouse for my best Sunday dress, snatch my neat satchel of campaign literature, and make for my district, four blocks away. I had three whole streets, and even Pete Jones admitted they were tough. Mr. Farrel, like the low, dishonest machine politician he was, practically had the vote of Lumber Lane tied up, owing to a watermelon and free beer picnic he sponsored for the Lumber Lane social society. Christmas Street was a little better. Quite a few people on Christmas Street thought Mr. Farrel was a heel. Marion Street was a sort of No Man's Land, an off again, on again outfit.

I used to start out about 4:00 p.m., ringing doorbells. "Good afternoon, madam," I used to say politely to the lady of the house. "May I tell you about Mr. C. James McGinty, who is running for record chief?"

"Mr. McGinty," I would continue firmly, "is a man of the people." At this point I whipped out Mr. McGinty's picture, showing the great man surrounded by his nine kiddies and Mrs. McGinty.

"Nine kiddies!" I used to say to the lady of the house. "And furthermore, Mr. McGinty is a self-made man. Mr. McGinty's platform will mean a square deal for business, a square deal for labor, a square deal for the taxpayer."

"Uhmm," the lady of the house usually said. In rare cases the lady of the house began sneering before I even got Mr. McGinty's picture out of my satchel. She would answer my honest, upright arguments with a lot of blatherskite about the time Mr. McGinty was assistant city-sanitation supervisor and the League of Women Voters investigated him and the governor, a Democrat, appointed some sort of a committee to audit his accounts and just then poor Mr. McGinty, whose only wish was to stay in office and fight to clear his fair name from the aspersions cast upon it by evil-minded corrupt politicians, was taken down with a dreadful illness and his doctor made him resign—a matter of life and death.

"Mr. McGinty," I used to say with offended dignity to the ladies who went around believing the things they had read in the newspapers about Mr. McGinty, "Mr. McGinty only seeks vindication at the font of our American democracy. The people will answer the League of Women Voters."

"Bah!" some of the ladies said, but then, they were Democrats. The Republican ladies were usually willing to let that little matter of the assistant sanitation supervisor fall into a bygones-are-bygones class. I had a lot of trouble with the "independent" voters though. They just didn't seem to care who won the election, the great Mr. McGinty, or that fiend-among-fiends, Mr. Farrel. "Bunch of crooks, the whole passel of them," people were always telling me. "But Mr. McGinty's platform!" I would cry to these voters. I used to reach into my satchel, hand my client a copy of the McGinty platform, and keeping one for myself, read the golden phrases aloud with solemn emphasis.

"C. James McGinty," the platform started out, "belongs to the party of Lincoln and Coolidge. He believes that free enterprise has brought this country to its present state of enduring prosperity. [This was 1927.] Capital and labor must cooperate." The rest of the platform was of the same heady stuff. Of course we McGinty campaign workers were slightly handicapped by the fact that Mr. Farrel, that demagogue, also stood for free American enterprise, the cooperation of capital and labor, and enduring prosperity. Then suddenly Mr. Farrel swooped down into my territory. Hordes of Mr. Farrel's dupes appeared on Christmas Street, ringing doorbells and telling the voters that Mr. McGinty was a rum-runner and other frightful things. "Farrel says, Take the Marines out of Nicaragua!" a sign in bright red and blue paint in a vacant lot on Christmas Street clarioned to the world. "What does Farrel know about the marines?" Mr. McGinty roared at that night's meeting.

But by November 1 it was clear that McGinty would have to take a stand on the Nicaragua situation. Farrel was roaring up and down the city, claiming that the party of Lincoln and Coolidge was murdering innocent Nicaraguans and slaughtering decent American boys, all for certain Republican bigwigs who were in the banana business. But what to do? Suppose McGinty came out for keeping the marines in Nicaragua? Then the people who believed in taking them out would vote against him. A man can't take a chance like *that*. Farrel maybe could play with fire, but McGinty was the underdog in this campaign, what with the League of Women Voters always meddling around. Finally McGinty came out for protecting American business against the onslaughts of foreign competitors, while standing firmly against the waste of the taxpayers' money in foreign adventures. A few of my voters swung back into line, but I was frankly worried as election day rolled around.

I was cutting school Tuesday. McGinty's faithful campaign workers got $5 on election day for shepherding in their votes. Bright and early, at 7:15, I was racing down Christmas Street to call for old Mr. Schmaltz. Mr. Schmaltz was a bit deaf, but he had promised his valuable vote to McGinty. When I arrived, however, catastrophe sat on the front porch in the beefy person of Jake Freeman, a Farrel henchman.

"Hello sister," said Mr. Freeman coarsely, "I guess I got yuh beat to the punch. Schmaltz came over to us last night."

My face fell. "Go peddle yuh line of talk some place else," Mr. Freeman added, smug to the last drop. I couldn't believe it. Schmaltz betray us? Never! He did, though.

But alas, this was only the beginning. No subterfuge was too contemptible for the Farrel forces. I took three of my voters to the polls, and was just returning up Christmas Street when I was arrested, or anyway held for questioning by the Cleveland truant officer, a certain Mr. Ellsworth (Dem.). The questioning was short but to the point. It consisted of one query: "How old are you?" I lied, but in vain. I was ignominiously hauled back off to high school, a victim of Mr. Freeman's acumen. I didn't get the $5 and Mr. McGinty didn't win the election. He was snowed under, as a matter of fact.

I was mighty surprised a few days after the election, however, to read in the paper that Mr. Farrel had appointed Mr. McGinty assistant record chief. Mr. Farrel said it was a victory for non-partisan, honest government, but Father said Mr. McGinty had thrown the election, and after all, it didn't really matter whom you voted for.

And as I said, the McGinty-Farrel scrap reminds me strongly of the current Willkie-Roosevelt duel. Not that Mr. Willkie or Mr. Roosevelt will throw the election, but it doesn't really matter which one you vote for. Like McGinty and Farrel, it can be chalked up, "No Contest!"

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Britain's Writers under the Bombs

J. B. S. Haldane tells how G. B. Shaw, H. G. Wells, and others are faring in the war. Sean O'Casey is now on the London "Daily Worker" editorial board. Where Strachey, et al., stand.

London, England (delayed).

THE editors of NEW MASSES have asked me to write on British intellectuals and the war. I am singularly unqualified to do so. I suppose I am an intellectual, but I am also a skilled manual worker. I can still analyze air when it is so full of carbon dioxide that I am long past coherent speech or writing. I believe I am the only person who ever got duplicate determinations of urea in urine to agree to one part in a thousand. So, while I have a certain skill in the handling of words or other symbols—which I suppose is in a sense the definition of an intellectual—I find the company of skilled manual workers quite as congenial as that of intellectuals.

Hence I know very little about what British intellectuals, and especially minor intellectuals, are thinking. I suppose our leading intellectuals are George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells. Shaw is eighty-three, but his eye is not dim. He is a regular reader of the London *Daily Worker,* and when I told him on a midsummer day that we were going back from four to eight pages, his whole face lit up with pleasure before even he had time to think of an epigram. He then told me what our policy ought to be, in particular that we should stress even more strongly the necessity of turning out the present government in favor of one which the Soviet Union could trust, in order to avoid defeat. Shaw is a little too fond of words for their own sake, and forty years of flattery by the British ruling class have done him no good. But he is a socialist, though a socialist of a rather highbrow kind. And he has a genuine admiration for Marx. Hence he does not find the approach of a revolutionary situation discouraging; although "he don't obey no orders unless they is his own," he appears to feel that the policy of the Communist Party is nearer to his desire than any of the alternatives now facing the British people.

H. G. WELLS

Wells is a very different case. He has invented some twenty different futures for humanity, and humanity refuses to conform to even one of them. Even the present war, which was to have begun with unparalleled violence and then petered out, is doing the exact opposite. Wells looks forward to a sort of socialism, but he disapproves of Marxism. Unfortunately, while he is too modest about his great merits as a popularizer of science and wholly unaware of his claims to be one of the greatest of English stylists, he is an over-enthusiastic Phreatist. He sees the collapse of capitalism as the possible end of civilization, in which case New York, London, and Paris of 1939 are the sorry climax of human achievement. But at least he has not so far become a propagandist for the British government, as in 1914 when he invented the phrase "a war to end war."

I know extremely little about the activities of minor intellectuals. In September 1939 University College, London, was evacuated. Some of my colleagues went to Wales. I was merely told to evacuate my laboratory on three days' notice. I refused to do so, and although I was subjected to petty persecution regarding electricity, water, and the like, and my assistants were threatened, I have hung on for nearly a year, and made some discoveries. I have also been doing work of a somewhat dangerous character, designed to save the lives of certain members of the British forces. Many of my colleagues have given up research and teaching altogether, some being transferred to war work, others apparently being prevented from working, on the general principle that war and culture do not mix—a principle which was not adopted in republican Spain and is not adopted in China.

As a result I have had very little conversation with other intellectuals, and my generalizations have little validity. But here they are, for what they are worth. Very few support the Chamberlain policy. Typical of this small minority is Arthur W. M. Bryant, a historian whose political philosophy may be judged by his enthusiastic support of King Charles II's acceptance, by the secret treaty of Dover, of a subsidy from the French King Louis XIV, which enabled him to defy his own Parliament. A fair fraction of intellectuals give a qualified support to the present (June 1940) coalition government. I do not know of any fascists who can be called intellectuals, though some Catholic writers are fascist in their outlook, and may be members of fascist organizations.

It is usual, we are told, for rats to leave a sinking ship. A number of our left writers (I must not accuse them of rodent affinities) have leaped onto the sinking ship of British capitalism. These include John Strachey, with his *Programme for Progress,* which might possibly be justifiable in an epoch of profound peace and stability, but is singularly inappropriate to a revolutionary situation such as appears to be approaching. Again, Bertrand Russell and C. E. M. Joad, who used to be pacifists, are in favor of this war, in which they themselves are too old to participate except, in Mr. Joad's case, as a target for bombs.

The number of people who have changed their opinions can be greatly exaggerated. The *New Statesman* serves as a "mourners' bench" for these converts. However, since its editor is in the habit of deleting from the letters to his journal any passages which do not suit him, readers may at times be misled, to put it mildly.

The bulk of intellectuals, so far as I can judge, adopt a negative attitude. They are aware of the past record of the Chamberlain government. They see that the inclusion of some Labor Party men and women has made no serious difference in its policy, but has made possible certain attacks on hours of labor. Their attitude is that of a great biologist (name suppressed for fear of victimization) who said to me, "The British ruling class think they will win the war for the following reasons: right always prevails, and we are always in the right. Neither premise of this syllogism is true." In fact some of these intellectuals expect a Nazi victory. Some are cynical about it, others are justifiably afraid of the consequences. But they do nothing definite, because at the present time the only opposition party is the Communist Party, and to join it is a very big and not very safe step. It is not even too good for one's career to be seen reading the *Daily Worker.* The prevalent cynical attitude is very reminiscent of that of Russian intellectuals between 1906 and 1914, as portrayed by such writers as Artzibashev.

THE PACIFISTS

There is a fairly small but compact group of pacifists. A large fraction are pacifists on religious grounds. Some of them are thoroughly genuine people whose attitude one can respect if one does not share it. A handful thought they were Marxists till the test came. Others had very close contact with Nazi organizations before the war, and may still have it. The government has short-circuited their activities fairly efficiently by allowing conscientious objectors to escape military service. The pacifists seem to have concentrated on creating conscientious objectors and securing their exemption. They have not tried to start a mass movement, and have withdrawn literature to which the government objected. No leading pacifists have yet been imprisoned, as Russell was in the last war. In fact the pacifists have gone some way to justify the popular belief that they are primarily interested in their own skins.

Marxism is very strong among the younger intellectuals, particularly in the scientific, medical, musical, and artistic professions. Of the Marxists a considerable fraction are Communist Party members, and others, including myself, cooperate actively with the party. An example of the scientific group's activities is the several courses of lectures delivered at Marx House on scientific topics. For instance I lectured on human physiology. The science faculty of Marx House also held two two-day conferences during the last year. One

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was primarily occupied with the application of Marxism to research problems, the other to the economic and social problems which the war has raised for scientists. At one of these there were about one hundred scientific workers, at the other about sixty. The faculty of history held a smaller conference—which I, for one, found very interesting—on the English revolution of the seventeenth century. So Marx House is really beginning to form the nucleus of a Marxist University. Unfortunately our efforts have been hampered, though by no means checked, by the war.

It is very interesting to find that a number of scientific workers who do not accept Marxist economics and politics are using dialectical materialism in their work. I think particularly of Darlington's *The Evolution of Genetic Systems*. Things have gone so far that at a recent discussion meeting of the Genetical Society at least three speakers quoted Lenin or Engels in order to explain their own positions on biological problems. Of course it may be said that one might be better occupied than in making Marxism respectable in academic circles. I do not agree. Intellectuals must have some acquaintance with Marxist theory before they can be expected to adopt Marxist practice, and we are likely to need some Marxist practice in the near future.

On the musical front we have such men as Alan Bush and John Goss for whom music, and particularly choral singing, is not only an art but a weapon in the class struggle, as it was for Mozart and Beethoven, not to mention others. In literature, the only major figure who is actively identified with the workers' cause is Sean O'Casey, one of my colleagues on the editorial board of the *Daily Worker*. Again, he is not, to the best of my knowledge, a Communist Party member, and indeed the Communists in his latest play, *The Star Turns Red,* might be anarchists or syndicalists.

WAR WORKERS

The most remarkable changes of political opinion at the moment are taking place, not among intellectuals but among intelligent men and women of many different types who are doing, or trying to do, war work of one type or another, whether in the fighting forces, in civil defense, in production, or in administration. They find their work hampered by what they describe as bureaucracy, stupidity, greed, or treachery. They are beginning to see that there is something badly wrong with the existing order. A number of them go further and realize that there is something right in the Communist criticism of it. It is among them that Communist propaganda is most useful and effective when properly carried out; but the volume of this propaganda is small. They are waiting for a lead. And at present many of them are toying with something like technocracy, which can lead very rapidly to fascism. It will be necessary to convince them, by arguments on the lines of Engels' *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific* that socialism can be established only by the workers, though of course it will need trained technicians.

To sum up: opinion is more fluid today than at any time in the past. There is a hard core of Marxist opinion which has been strengthened by the substantial verification of Marxist theory by current events. But the majority of intellectuals are bewildered at the collapse of the world in which they lived and the theories in which they believed. Perhaps this does not very much matter. The opinions of intellectuals take a long time to percolate through to the workers, and it is primarily the workers, not the intellectuals, whose action or inaction will determine the future of Britain.

J. B. S. HALDANE.

Michaels.

". . . and thus, my friends, let us go forward to a new society . . ."

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★

Almazan Prepares

WHEN General Almazan left Veracruz for his "vacation" some weeks ago most informed Mexicans knew he wasn't traveling for his health. He went abroad, in the tradition, "to fight his way back to Mexico City." His followers, many of them in highest circles, brazenly pushed their plottings, remained in close contact with the *"jefe."* Gunrunning along both coasts went on furiously: political maneuverings within the country continued at top speed. The Monterrey millionaire, safe in Havana, broadcast to his crowd: "I shall be in Mexico at the moment when it appears opportune. . . ." About this time President Cardenas decided never to allow an "opportune" moment. Arrests of Almazanist bigshots began. Two generals, Alfredo Lazano and Jose Domingo Ramirez Garrido, were taken into custody in Acapulco for "desertion and rebellious activity." The home of Luis Morones, who is tied to Almazan, was raided, his organization, the CROM, held under close observation. The National Committee of the Railroad Workers Union demanded "maximum punishment" for the traitors. The CTM held its Workers Militia in readiness.

These measures are needed, for the lesson of Spain is still painfully remembered. But as the Communist Party of Mexico pointed out, more is necessary; the issue must be met squarely, fundamentally. Almazan derives much of his strength from dissatisfaction with living conditions within the country. Those conditions must be improved immediately in order to cut any possible mass base from under the traitorous general. The Communists urged Cardenas to push land distribution, reduce the high cost of living, jail speculators, reduce rents. They urged too "a mobilization of the people" by means of Committees of Struggle against Reaction and Imperialism all over Mexico. Although measures are being taken to check the counter-revolutionary disease, most Mexican progressives feel that it must be cured at its source.

Argentine Fireworks

ARGENTINA is the Canada of South America: the dominant industrialized power south of the Panama Canal, wealthy in its enormous production of wheat, beef, and corn. Last week its president, Roberto Ortiz, leader of the Radical Party, suddenly resigned his office; but on the 170-to-one vote of a joint session of the Argentine Congress, he decided to change his mind. Behind the scenes a struggle has been taking place between the native bourgeois bloc, which wants to jockey with American, German, and of course British imperialism on the basis of strengthening nationalist policies at home, and the ultra-conservative bloc, headed by the vice president, Ramon Castillo, who has strong leanings to native fascism and the axis powers. Ortiz had been ill; Castillo was running the country, supported in the predominantly Radical Cabinet by the minister of finance. At the same time a Senate investigating committee uncovered a graft scandal in the purchase of lands for a government airport. The reactionary National Democrats attempted to turn these revelations into a "Stavisky scandal" that would unseat the Radical Cabinet and embarrass the Radical majority in the Argentine lower house. Just at the moment they planned to remove the pro-Ortiz Gen. Carlos Marquez, who had been punishing Nazi-minded army officers, the Castillo forces were themselves embarrassed by the implication of their own man, the finance minister, Dr. Pedro Groppo, in the land scandals. By resigning when he did, President Ortiz turned the tables on his opponents. He is now proceeding to clean up the army, and is expected to reorganize his Cabinet.

Japanese Jitters

THE most dramatic event in the accelerated fascization of Japan under the new Prince Konoye Cabinet was last week's recall of some forty career diplomats from Japanese embassies throughout the world, among them Tokyo's emissaries to the United States, Great Britain, and the USSR. Since July 17, when the Yonai Cabinet was replaced, the major Japanese parties have been dissolved, together with the Federation of Japanese Trade Unions and minor organizations: every sign points to continued fascization along the same lines. In foreign affairs the Konoye Cabinet has secured the closing of the Burma road to China and the withdrawal of British marines from Shanghai, completed last week. Pressure continues upon Indo-China, from which the Japanese intend to secure economic and strategic concessions, opening the way for a possible invasion of China's southernmost Yunnan province, but more probably for the short-circuiting of Singapore through Siam. Last week Japanese officials made demands upon the Netherlands East Indies for lowered tariffs on ores, rubber, and oil—a counterweight against the effects of American licensing regulations. And as a token that their main orientation continues against the South Pacific, the Japanese-controlled Manchukuoan government concluded its long-delayed border clarification with the Mongolian Peoples Republic. Japan's major pressure, now that Britain has virtually withdrawn from the Far East, cuts athwart American imperialist ambitions in the South Pacific. Tokyo is reported nervous over the possibilities that American destroyers will take harbor in Singapore; the leasing of the Canton island base was frowned upon; and rumors of improved Soviet-American relations, involving the opening of an American consulate in Vladivostok, is reported to have given Japan the jitters.

Chungking Burns

PHOSPHOROUS bombs and high explosives shattered China's capital city of Chungking last week, the thirty-fourth such bombardment since the first of the year. Hundreds of planes came two thousand miles inland to the province of Szechwan, deliberately reaching for the high cliffs above the Yangtze where the city rests. Forty thousand people are refugees from this raid alone, their tinder homes blazing in the dry August sun. As many as two thousand are reported dead and lost. Let us remember, while all eyes are riveted on the duel across the English Channel, the horror that Japan's invasion means for the men and women, the children of China. The responsibility for the bombardment of London and Berlin lies much deeper than Hitler: it is the ugly fruit of a wretched system, bringing Europe to ruins in its decline. The responsibility for what happened twice last week in China's capital, also, does not rest with Tokyo alone: American business men—the great pretenders of democracy—made it possible with their trade in copper, aluminum, and steel scrap that Washington still has not curbed.

Balkan Flux

POLITICAL relations in the Balkans continue in the utmost flux. Negotiations between Rumanian and Hungarian representatives over the Transylvanian problem broke down last week. Hungary mobilized for war. The issue was thrown back into Hitler's lap, but as we go to press, discussions have again been resumed. Hungary demands most of Transylvania, against the wish of many Transylvanians themselves; the Rumanians have been trying to delay matters indefinitely, but obviously the axis powers will not permit a center of war to develop in Germany's rear at such a time. Thus, even before the issue with Britain is anywhere near settled, the treaties which accompanied Versailles have been thrown into the dustbin. Last week Rumania settled a problem which antedated the first world war itself: southern Dobruja was returned, together with important towns on the Danube and Black Sea, to the Bulgarians from whom this strip of soil was seized in 1913. Meanwhile nothing more dramatic has happened in Mussolini's campaign against Greece than continued Italian troop movements through Albania (causing alarm in Yugoslavia, too), the mining by the Greeks of the strait to Epirus, the rich tobacco area, together with a partial mobilization in Greece. The issue of Greece is bound up with the future of Italian operations against British possessions in the Near East. Churchill practically wrote this area off in his speech last week, but Egypt may resist the Italians, inevitably involving Turkey, who

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cannot look with comfort on the approach of Italian influence in the eastern Mediterranean.

Unrest in the Rear

IN FRANCE last week agents of Adolf Hitler went visiting. They dropped into civilian internment camps, armed with long lists of names furnished them by their French friends, and snatched hundreds of German nationals from French confinement only to transport them to German jails. At the Gurs camp in the Pyrenees, Germans of the famed International Brigade which fought in Spain were seized; others, who had enlisted in the Foreign Legion last winter and who had been "purged" by the French, fell to the conqueror. Intellectuals who had sought to aid France's fight against fascism, but who had been jailed, were carried off to Germany.

In Paris the Germans were ransacking private homes, raiding art stores, tearing down statues. In Belgium one million unemployed, restless, bitter at their fate, were being impressed into forced labor as Leon Degrelle, Fascist leader, was being released from jail. New Nazi regulations were decreed against the Dutch, who, according to *BZ am Mittag,* "refuse all that is German." In recent weeks outbreaks have been frequent in Holland.

In Oslo Gestapo agents raided homes, offices, and publishing plants, and arrested leaders of the Norwegian Communist Party, thereby underscoring again the lie that Nazis and Communists collaborate. Other raids took place throughout Norway, where Communists have been leading working class unity against both camps of the warring imperialists. Plainly Hitler has his hands full behind the far flung lines of his armies. The people of Europe stir uneasily. They know now the perfidy of their old rulers and are only waiting for the right moment to cast off the new.

Pot and Kettle

THE pot and kettle technique of a capitalist political campaign has its value. Voters may learn—not from any "radical extremist," but from the secretary of the interior—that President Roosevelt "cannot adjourn the Battle of Britain" in order to debate issues with his rival for the presidency. They may learn from Senator Bridges of New Hampshire, replying for Mr. Willkie, that the Democratic administration is tending toward "an American form of Nazism." Secretary Ickes publicizes further the fascist big-business attitudes and connections of Commonwealth & Southern's ex-president. Willkie points a mean finger at Hague, Kelly, and Tammany, while Ickes says that Wendell used to be a member of Tammany himself and, besides, just look at some of the *Republican* machines and personalities. Willkie calls Ickes a stooge, Bridges calls Ickes a Hitler in short pants, and a chiseler; and Ickes calls Willkie a demagogue, a weasel, and (classic pot-kettle phrase) a "rich man's Roosevelt."

The self-exposure of this burlesque is enough to shame the Minskys. Not the least indecent feature is Willkie's "charge," and the administration's denial, that large numbers of workers are being added to WPA rolls. Wendell says it's being done for votes, and the administration answers—truthfully enough—that it isn't being done at all. The real reply to both parties comes from Frank Ingram, general secretary of the Workers Alliance, that more than a million unemployed have been certified for WPA jobs but cannot get them. Both candidates, Mr. Ingram points out, "support the Wall Street program to conscript the unemployed into the army." That truth becomes clearer with every gesture in this fundamentally phony war between the two old parties.

"Legal" Vigilantism

OKLAHOMA'S "law and order" forces have helped drive home a point which we have made many times: that this war is a continuation of 1914-18. Last week they dusted off a 1917 criminal syndicalism law, designed to strangle protests against the draft, and used it to arrest twenty persons leading the fight in Oklahoma against the Burke-Wadsworth draft bill. Eight of those arrested, including Robert Wood, state secretary of the Communist Party, are held under $50,000 bail each and face a possible ten year prison term. Twelve others are under arrest as "material witnesses"; bail, $2,000. In wartime, with conscription in force, this violation of civil liberties—free speech, reasonable bail, freedom of assembly—would be intolerable enough. At this time its most shocking feature is not that it occurs in a nation still technically at peace, but that it occurs *as a matter of course,* as just one more of the brazen violations of the Constitution taking place in nearly every state. The arrest of Communist Party election canvassers, the persecution of citizens who signed Communist ballot petitions have been the most conspicuous of these violations, but by no means the only ones. In Birmingham, Ala., some twelve persons a day have been held under Ordinance 4902, which directs policemen to arrest "without warrant" anyone "found under suspicious circumstances." Distributing leaflets, selling progressive literature, or being a union leader are favorite charges under the ordinance. However, when Joseph Gelders, of the Southern Conference on Human Welfare, and others passed out leaflets challenging the ordinance they were arrested as "vagrants"—to avoid a court test of the law's constitutionality as well as a test of the sentiment for its repeal. That sentiment is strong in Birmingham. It is strong, in regard to all "legal" vigilantism, throughout the nation. Give it voice enough and its strength will prevail.

As He Sowed

BY THE tears of the New York *Times* and the *Herald Tribune* shall ye know him! For when these self-righteous newspapers weep for him, it is time for caution. They mourn the loss of Leon Trotsky. They are sad now that he is dead at the hands of one of his criminal followers. They grieve over the end of a "revolutionary"—the kind of revolutionary they approve—the man who devoted his life to sabotaging the great people's movement, and who openly called for the destruction of the first socialist state. The man they call martyr was repudiated by the Russian people, hated by the working class of the world. He pursued his ends with the weapons of intrigue and arson and murder. Around him gathered provocateurs and political degenerates who offered themselves for hire to the enemies of the people everywhere—to the Nazis in Germany, to the military clique in Japan, to the Almazanists in Mexico, to the British and French and American imperialists.

Trotsky is dead. His house had witnessed brawling before, when Trotsky and his disciple Diego Rivera came to blows, and Rivera was banished. The little malevolent sect that looked to Trotsky for direction quarreled and split repeatedly. The continuous internecine quarrels resulted in murder. Trotsky died, as he lived, in an atmosphere of recrimination and bitter hostility, at the hand of a member of the irresponsible gang he had created for his own purposes.

Roundup

CONSCRIPTION: "Negroes cannot expect any fair human treatment" under the Burke-Wadsworth bill, declares the Brooklyn, N. Y., Council of the National Negro Congress. Passage of the bill would aggravate lynching, poll tax discrimination, and other problems especially affecting Negroes. Besides, the Army and Navy departments, by their Jim Crow policies, "have already demonstrated for what they think Negro Americans are suited." . . . A delegation of one hundred lawyers from all over the nation has handed Senator Wheeler of Montana a brief proving that the Burke-Wadsworth bill is unconstitutional: the US Constitution does not give Congress power to conscript manpower in time of peace. The brief was prepared under the auspices of the Lawyers Committee to Keep the United States Out of War.

INVESTIGATION WANTED: Rep. John Coffee of Washington—and a lot of other people—want to know just who put pressure on the Department of Justice to drop an anti-trust suit against big oil companies for the sake of "defense." Mr. Coffee is calling for a congressional inquiry. "I fail to see anything in national defense," he says, "which would seem to necessitate or require the dropping of civil actions against the oil monopoly or any other industrial monopoly."

LABOR: Increasing speedup in Buick results in protest meetings by the United Automobile Workers, whose members are told by plant foremen that it is their "patriotic duty" to work harder. Buick is part of Knudsen's General Motors. . . . The Wright Aeronautical Corp., battening on government orders for planes, underpays its employees, works them overtime, and fingerprints and photographs them. . . . Strike: twelve thousand members of District Council No. 9, Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators, and Paperhangers (AFL) have tied up the painting and decorating industry of Manhattan,

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Bronx, and Richmond boroughs because employers refused to discuss union demands for better pay, lower hours. The strike is spreading, with the participation of allied unions and union locals in other states where New York contractors have jobs. . . . David Lasser, who deserted and then betrayed the Workers Alliance which he had headed, gets a caress from FDR for forming a "100 percent American" unemployed group out of a handful of Lasser followers. The President's letter to Lasser may turn out to be a kiss of death, so frankly does it welcome the new groups as part of the administration's war machine.

CHINA: The Eighth Route Army made a sudden and dramatic appearance, cutting the railroad to Peiping and, it is reported, nearing the very gate of the capital of Manchukuo.

STRANGE IDEAS OF "DEMOCRACY": Beware a Council of National Defense that comes bearing "propaganda for democracy." This fine "educational campaign" by the council has the eager cooperation of J. Edgar Hoover and his FBI. Do we need to define the "democracy" or the kind of "education" the council has in mind? Remember George Creel?

As Surely as the Grass Shall Split the Rock

To Messieurs Petain, Laval, Flandin, and Daladier

Hurry! they have halted by your window:
the bells toll: your fatherland has won—

So into line and down the boulevards
(how beautiful is Paris in the Spring)
the sun shines on your coffinsilk of hat:
the goldentipped stilette behind your ear:
the impeccable tails wafting to the rear—

Down past the dancing zebras of the awnings
you march, and hold before you like a lance
the tight-rolled audits of the Bank of France—
past the waterblossoms of the fountains,
down the Elysian Fields, the strange beast rolls
into the Place d'Etoile and there uncoils—
step forward: drape the lockets of your love
about the arch's neck: acknowledge the brand—
the bells toll, toll—your fatherland . . .

Do you remember, patriotic brothers,
the weary preparation for this day?
the jubilant parades past the vaults?
the accusing lips? the bundled fists in the square?
When delicate at board, you heard the Others
beating on the tight drums of your fears,
and the wine spilled—what mark was on the cloth?

The people . . . always there were the people . . .
fooled and betrayed: stuffed in the mouths of cannon:
planted in hedges between the false frontiers:
scratched and rescratched on diplomatic rolls:
shuffled as packs of cards without pulse or blood:
tortured in khaki, tormented in mufti,
counted by nose and by night: filed in the census:
the long line twisting past the Deputies:
the brass tags about the neck . . .
numbered and hung . . . the people . . .

But now down avenues of bayonets
you march as safe as in your drawing-room,
and quarantined beyond the gleaming blades
the citizens can only nod their heads—
the citizens can cluster in gray casements—
be thankful for your roaring gifts from heaven:
the clanking bloodless humor of the tanks:
the arm upraised against the venomous sky . . .
now are you high priests at the ritual of slaughter
now have you drawn the twilight hour closer.

And here behind our watermoat
as Cain behind his pride
we hear the bells toll—and some rejoice—
and some clasp hands in quiet corners and resolve—
beyond all maps the fatherlands are drawn

One year ago at Chateauneuf-du-Pape
I wandered down the valley of the Rhone
and saw the plowed land smile like a pregnant woman,
and saw the vineleaves wreathing in the sun,
the arcs of peasants' backs: the cottage stones:
the black spearpoints of poplars in the fields

But now I stumble in the brain's terrain,
and come across the leering empty helmet,
the bayonet still quivering in the earth,
the broken tread, the overturned lorry, the cigarette butt,
the torn image of child, the letter home—
dismal catalogue in time's eventful junkyard
parts of men and parts of motors

landscape of desolation

Oh read on yellow parchment of their chests
your victory inscribed with Skoda shells!
how many joined their fathers underground!
(sometimes the blood is more than the earth can bear,
and it shoots up through the stalks into the poppies
and dances crimson ballets on thin necks . . .)

As surely as the grass shall split the rock,
as surely as the aching of the tides,
France shall remember you and stamp your image
on ignominious coins tossed into wells,
a place at table for you beside Judas,
a feast of delicate flesh and young men's skulls—
drink deep the bloody wine of your own choice,
and cotton the ears against the future's voice.

Yes, after the salutes, human as pistons,
after the cordial handshake and the wordless speech,
the document duly signed, the seal delivered,
stamped on the brow and the heart, fixed in pavement,
the swastika-fob hanging from history's watch—
go home and hear the ticking in your ears,
draw the curtains against the invading sun,
enjoy the last quarter-hour, fix the latch,
sink wearily into the soothing lace—

a hand shall pull the quilt over your face . . .

Across our watermoat we hear the bells—
We are the Not-yet-Dead: shall we weep?
Or make of directed hate our proper love?

SIDNEY ALEXANDER.
(June 1940)

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Henri Barbusse: Warrior for Peace

Five years have passed since the author of "Under Fire" died. The war he sought to prevent is here, but his dream of everlasting peace has surged across the world.

FIVE years have passed since Henri Barbusse died in Moscow. Although his death incalculably lessened the total of the world's giant spirits, the five years since his passing have affirmed the only immortality in which he believed. "The important thing is to continue living after death," Barbusse said.

Barbusse was a great writer fired by the purity of his belief in the liberation of humanity. Barbusse the writer and artist was Barbusse the man and fighter. To those of his critics who lamented that he had abandoned "pure art" for the "lesser function" of the political agitator, Barbusse replied with scorn:

> I do not write propaganda. It is my enemies who have made propaganda of my work. I am not to blame for having created the characters of my books. Those whose guilt created these personages must be held accountable. I do not invent anything that is not real. I paint all that I see. If the bourgeois gentlemen do not enjoy this, so much the worse for them. The people think differently.

What troubled the "admirers" of Barbusse was not that they had lost the creator of those early poems and books. They were furious because Henri Barbusse could not be bought. The so-called loss to art by Barbusse's defection from the standards of his critics was sheer fiction. Language has never surpassed the dramatic and artistic values of his war and post-war novels. Never have the ideas of a writer received such lofty expression. Never has the word stirred the masses with such passion as his call to the world's men of good will to rise together and forever end the holocaust of war. Barbusse's testament, printed in *Monde,* the magazine he published until his death, is a plea to his fellow craftsmen to finish forever with art for art's sake. "The writer belongs to the people," he wrote. "His role is a social one; his obligation, to society. He must understand the gigantic and definitive conflict that sets the old order against the new."

Henri Barbusse made his debut as a writer in 1895, with the volume of poems called *Pleureuses.* In 1903, literary circles were delighted with his novel *Les Suppliants.* In *L'Enfer* (1908) and *Nous Autres* (1914), Barbusse displayed the realism he had admired so greatly in Zola. But it is impossible to dissociate Barbusse from the background of the war era in which he lived. Barbusse embraced a historic moment heroically, and will forever remain fixed in that moment. He is the poet of war; not a poet who lyricized carnage, but a poet ruthless toward its horror and despair.

I see him leaving the trenches, that Cote 119 he describes in *Under Fire* (1916) . . . his hair disheveled, his clothes torn by the barbed wire and caked with mud and blood, his gray-green eyes wild with fury. I see him looking from his window, gazing at humanity enslaved, filled with prophetic vision, the vision of *Clarte* (1919).

I see the gaunt apostolic figure walking always into the future, the future revealed in his manifestoes and speeches collected in *Paroles d'un Combatant,* the 1917-19 notes of a soldier. I see the sad face lit with hope, the hope that suffuses *Le Lueur dans L'Abime* (1920). I see his nobility, the nobility of *Le Couteau entre les Dents* (1921). I see Henri Barbusse wrenching from the minds of men the concept of the inevitability of war between workers. His weapons were fury, hope, nobility—and the future.

After the firing had ceased, while yet the world's earth ran hot with the blood of ten million killed, Barbusse in "peace" continued to struggle against those who had been responsible for the war. He was not satisfied merely by the overwhelming success of *Under Fire.* The success proved it was possible and necessary to mobilize the masses who desired peace. Barbusse wrote the historic *Manifesto to the Intellectuals of the World.* He founded the Clarte Group. This was the first attempt at uniting the writers and artists of every country in the world. From Clarte house,

HENRI BARBUSSE. *Minna Harkavy's sculpture of the famous French writer whose name became a universal symbol in the struggle against war.*

manifestoes, pamphlets, messages, telegrams, pleas issued in a constant stream to intellectuals the world over. They spoke of peace. They called for organization. Clarte Groups were founded everywhere in Europe and in some countries of the Americas. Henri Barbusse had become a universal symbol of the world that was to be forged from the ruins of the old. Clarte became the League for Intellectual Solidarity, "for the triumph of the international cause."

It was in 1933 that Barbusse founded *Commune,* which until the present war was the central organ of the International Association of Writers for the Defense of Culture, established in the same year; this organization's second congress was celebrated in Spain in the very midst of bombfire.

It was at Barbusse's initiative that the first international congress against war was held in Amsterdam, in 1932. Delegates came from all over the world: writers, trade unionists, pacifists, all who hated war. "The working masses," Barbusse said at Amsterdam, "are not only the fount of social production; they are also the fount of culture." Barbusse had stated the case; the people alone could give the world its peace and its culture. The people would do so. It was the function of the intellectual to give the people its voice.

After the Amsterdam congress, Barbusse came to America, to carry forward the organization for peace. Accused of being a "dangerous alien," he was held on Ellis Island. Great protests freed him. In Madison Square Garden on Nov. 7, 1933, Barbusse the Communist, flanked by seamen and trade unionists, accompanied by veterans of the war, joined with Americans in celebration of the Soviet Revolution which had brought his future within the grasp of all. He spoke to the crowd in French, his message the Leninist struggle. Even here, at the close of a long and arduous lecture tour, worn with fatigue, Barbusse was not content merely to bring a message. The party of the working class was in dire need of funds; Barbusse would do his part in raising them. On my table as I write is a copy of the *Daily Worker* of that November 7. In the upper righthand corner is the inscription in ink, "Henri Barbusse, 7 Nov., 1933." Under the platform lights, weary, yet joyous, Barbusse autographed the *Daily Worker* so that his party could raise the money it so desperately needed.

The workers of Spain loved Barbusse. Ever since the Clarte days, his books had been translated into Spanish, and he was an important influence in forming the social concepts of modern Spanish writers. Barbusse

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went to Spain several months after the 1934 Asturian revolt. This was the period of Gil Robles' notorious "Black Biennial." Despite the attempts of the Civil Guard to restrain them, thousands of workers greeted the French writer on his arrival in Madrid. "Spaniards," he told them, "I shall never forget your enthusiastic reception. I have the firm conviction that the Spanish people will win their final victory over reaction." Two years later the Popular Front defeated that reaction. The day on which Barbusse died in Moscow was a day of mourning for the Spanish republic.

Soviet writers invited Barbusse to Moscow in 1935. They wished to honor him for his biography of Stalin. Stalin was for Barbusse the symbol of an epoch, the founder of a new world, a man who had fought the fight as Barbusse knew it must be fought.

Barbusse's last thoughts were of the struggle that must be conducted to save Abyssinia from the fascist invaders. His secretary tells how he urged the necessity for worldwide organization in defense of Abyssinia: "This can be the cause of another terrible war. . . . It can be avoided only if we start to work at once . . . it is the only way we can save the world from another catastrophe. . . ." Abyssinia was the prologue to the second imperialist war.

France is the prisoner of those who hated Barbusse. France has been delivered to her enemies, by the enemies of Henri Barbusse.

JOSE LIZARRAGA.

Writers in Action

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if seen in relation to the two congresses which preceded the one it reports. It is to be hoped that this book will draw many to read or reread the books covering the preceding congresses—*The American Writers Congress* published by International Publishers and *The Writer in a Changing World* published by the Equinox Press, both edited by Henry Hart.

At the first congress the dominant notes were the departure from the ivory tower, the assertion of the social role and function of writers, the conviction that the writer's highest hopes for maximum self-fulfillment was in a society where everyone could hope for it. These writers recognized that social injustice, shrinkage of opportunity and economic security affect them as writers and as human beings. They decided to organize, and to ally their organization with the progressive forces in society. At this congress, held early in 1935, was founded the League of American Writers which rapidly grew to a membership of some eight hundred and to a place of great influence in American literature.

Two years later, in 1937, the second congress was held. At this congress the dominant note was the defense of culture against fascism, with special emphasis on the defense of democratic Spain. Now there was no further need to agitate writers to leave ivory towers. The towers were becoming tenantless. The writers were in the thick of life, in the thick of the struggle. The congress was a clear demonstration of the writer's participation in life.

By the time the third congress was held in 1939, it was taken for granted that the writer was in life and in the struggle. The job now was to examine all the possibilities lying before the writer to make him effective in the social roles to which he had become committed.

These congresses, and the interim work and experiences of the League of American Writers, have had a powerful effect. Their influence extended to writers who sought to remain uninvolved and even to those who openly ranged themselves on the side of reaction. It reached the reading public through the books of socially minded writers—Steinbeck, Richard Wright, Albert Maltz, to name only the most recent. It penetrated into the colleges—even textbooks were forced to use the new words that had come into critical writing, to take into account the "social significance" which threw such clear light forward and back on all literature.

In the process of education through participation the writers gained strength and resolution. The last year has seen reaction riding in on the fearfully swift witchbrooms of war hysteria. People have been stampeded; people have been bullied out of their former minds. Reaction has used an old formula in new ways, equating the thing it fears with the thing the people fears, and using it as a convenient catchall for everything that might stand in its way: "Communists are the same as Nazis; everything progressive is Communist controlled; *Q.E.D.*, everything progressive is a Trojan horse."

This, in varying degree and in varying forms, according to the *mores* of the Dies committee and J. Parnell Thomas (and the as yet gentler *mores* of "changing liberalism"), has been directed against the League of American Writers. Yet, through storms in which other organizations have foundered, the League maintains its organization and continues its work, whose value has been acknowledged by its more conscientious assailants. Fewer than a hundred of its eight hundred members have left it, while thirty new members have been added. And despite the inclinations of publishers and the sabotage by certain literary editors the literary scene, wherever there is a show of vitality, exhibits the presence of at least the influence of the left.

In conclusion it is worth commenting on those who have defected. In the turn to the left, after 1932, many went unwillingly, sometimes in pursuit of their audiences whom otherwise they would have lost. Many were uncomfortable in their identification with the working class movement and never fully, or even substantially, accepted its program. They hedged their position around with qualifications and reservations. Noticeably they watched the horizon for turns in the political weather. Usually the time of their defection has been determined by the degree of their commitments. In their defection they are careful of course to strike noble attitudes. If, however, they wish to see what they actually look like there is a mirror they can use. Let them read the history of progressive movements of the past and contemplate the deserters of those periods.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

Reminding Mr. Laski

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY: AN INTERPRETATION, *by Harold J. Laski. Harper & Bros. $2.50.*

THERE is an inner logic which dictates the position and role of the liberal in capitalist society. Either he is driven to the realization that his place is with the working class, in which case he abandons all apologetics for capitalism; or he must propound ideas which, in their lunacy, offer some comfort to his distraught patrons. Thus Professor Laski, only a few weeks ago, promised socialism to the British workers after the war, provided they put in their twelve-hour days now to save the British empire. And in this book he recommends by way of solution for the problems of the American people a strong government and more power to the President.

In a study which, while dull and repetitious, contains much that is interesting and not a little of shrewd comment on our political system, the author has permitted himself to forget whole chapters in his own experience, in his own thinking. He tells us that the major parties in America are "agents of property interests," yet he calls for strength-

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ening the powers of the Chief Executive who is the creature of one of these parties. Here is a self-styled Marxist who acknowledges Lenin as one of the great political leaders and thinkers of all time, yet deals with the presidency as though the office were above and separate from the apparatus of the state. Mr. Laski should have refreshed his memory on the nature of the state, "the organ of class domination, the organ of oppression of one class by another," as Lenin put it.

On the one hand Mr. Laski insists that "it was the central purpose of the American dream to make possible a genuine freedom for the many and not a privileged license for the few." On the other he acknowledges the class character of the state when he explains that the struggle between the two capitalist parties "can safely afford to be built upon a difference of opinion about the rate of change, it cannot afford to be built upon a difference of opinion about the direction of change." If there can be no difference of opinion about the direction of change, and the major parties are the tools of capital, then the President must lead only in the direction which big business dictates.

To Mr. Laski the President of the United States is a man ennobled by his elevation, chosen upon political considerations of sectional forces but rising above all sectionalism, the "voice" of the American people, their spokesman. Strange judgments pervade the book as a result of this theory of deification by election. Woodrow Wilson becomes a truly great man (and the Versailles treaty meets with approval). Even Harding is patted.

This book could never have seen the light if its author had not made one fundamental and fantastic assumption. He writes as though the New Deal still lives and FDR is unswervingly its prophet. Roosevelt, he tells us, has had to fight with diminishing success for his measures since 1936 because Americans are "traditionally" fearful of a strong President in "normal" times. Congress has opposed him because Congress is "traditionally" anxious to assert its independence after yielding authority to the President in a "crisis." But the hound and the hare are hunting together. Roosevelt is heading us straight for militarization, dictatorship, and war. And Congress lags a little only because the people so patently hate all three. Mr. Laski delivered the lectures on which this book is based in the spring of 1939, but surely he read the proofs in 1940.

It is of the presidency in this America of 1940 that he is writing. The American people are being offered a choice between two representatives of the ruling class. That class, finance capital and its satellites, has war and hunger as its platform for the people. It is the Roosevelt of today of whom we think when we read that "the President must be given power commensurate to the functions he has to perform . . . for great power alone makes great leadership possible, it provides the unique chance of restoring America to its people." Today the power Mr. Laski would

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bestow would indeed give us "leadership"—of the Hitler-Mussolini-Franco-Petain brand. Ignoring the oppression of the vast majority of the people, Mr. Laski proposes a short cut to fascist dictatorship. He abstracts the presidency from the whole mechanism of class rule and prettifies its role. In this Mr. Laski serves the purposes of social democracy, the befuddlement of the masses of the people, the obscuring of their own interests. He has written a campaign document for Roosevelt in which he demands additional powers which FDR himself dares not yet openly request.

Will a more powerful Roosevelt or Willkie bring us peace, jobs, security, civil rights? Strange that Mr. Laski quotes Lord Bute's maxim but does not see its application right here in the United States: "The forms of a free and the ends of an arbitrary government are not altogether incompatible."

FRANK J. WALLACE.

Sights & Sounds

"Victory Tavern"

Ben Bengal's play, directed by Morris Carnovsky, at Camp Unity.

YOU will have to go to the progressive summer camps these days to get in touch with the mainstream of the American theater. The cut-and-dried summer theater productions are not in it, and Broadway is dead as a doornail. Here is an example:

On the night of August 15, Camp Unity (Wingdale, N. Y.) packed one thousand people into its Casino (its own guests and visitors from neighboring camps), to see the first production anywhere of the first full-length play by Ben Bengal, author of the vivid one-acter, *Plant in the Sun*. This was *Victory Tavern*. A couple of other "firsts" must be recorded here. Fourteen unemployed actors rehearsed voluntarily and without pay for eight weeks (mostly at night) to whip this production into shape and show its young author how it looked upon a stage; they were directed by Morris Carnovsky, Group Theater player handling a directing assignment for the first time. Play, author, cast, and director were cheered to the very literal rafters.

These actors, this director, out of regular employment at the time, were raring to "do something." They went on an actor's holiday—produced a play. The play by Bengal is not likely to be Broadway's meat. For one thing, it is a far from perfect play (in this instance irrelevant); for another, its material will not tempt a producer's appetite. In *Plant in the Sun* Bengal was dealing with a sitdown strike in a candy factory. In *Victory Tavern* he has returned to similar material, but has broadened and deepened it, examined more closely the class alliances and the human components of his characters. The tavern of his title is a hash joint run by Pop and his daughter Julia. The boys who patronize it are out on strike. Bound up directly with the fate of the strikers are the proprietor's bread-and-butter and the social and human education of his daughter. The theme of the drama is solidarity—both conscious and unconscious—and how it works itself out in terms of these very human beings. Pop cannot make up his mind which side he's on—he was once a factory foreman himself—and before he finds his side he goes through several kinds of hell. Julia, college-educated, learns that "a common laborer," like Happy, might well be her comrade and her husband. Drawn into the cross-currents of Bengal's play are a number of other characters, with their characteristically human aspirations, limitations, pettiness, grandeur, hopes, and tragedies. The solution may seem a trifle pat; the situations are sometimes obviously contrived. But the play as a whole answers a fundamental question: Ben Bengal has considerable talent and a real compassion for his people that he cannot, as yet, quite articulate. He has not yet learned how to put his drama together, to motivate his action.

For whatever the shortcomings of the drama, its people are definitely alive, warm, human, motivated in ways that all can understand. Pop is fighting for a living, just like the strikers. His cook, Shorty, dreams of winning the sweepstakes. Spike's wife is expecting a first baby. Julia has been soured, "hates everybody" and herself because she cannot find her place, at first, in life. Sam McGinnis Brodsky is the life-of-the-party boy with a ready wisecrack. "Lady Fingers" (a brawny mechanic) reveals in every word and action a deep humanity and love for his fellow man. Pop's foreman son, Vic, cleaves to his own "interests." They are a brawling crew that speaks with the common tongue. And if Bengal has a lot to learn about playwriting (and about people) he has already found his medium and his material. He will have to avoid a tendency to play around with his characters instead of diving more deeply into them; he will have to tighten up his structure and keep a more sober eye on what he wants to say. Much of his effervescence, while amusing, froths right off the surface like all bubbles, and leaves the mixture pretty flat.

In his first directing assignment, Morris Carnovsky reveals that the acting-company of the Group possesses a director who can readily challenge the best talent in the country. His many years of experience as a performer and a teacher were always apparent in his easy handling of his actors and the movement and life that lit up Bengal's script in every scene. Everything Carnovsky has done reveals the artist, and we can only hope he will be given broader scope to show us what more he can do. His company of volunteer professional actors was almost uniformly excellent. The "Pop" of Gregory Robins, the "Shorty" of

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Charles Thompson, Katherine Laughlin's "Julia," Jerry Sylvester's "Lady Fingers," Martin Ritt's "Happy," Joseph Julian's "Spike," Lou Polan's city marshal, and especially Ben Ross' "McGinnis" Brodsky were all characterizations that bit into the script. We wish them all a job, immediately. For in the Unity production of *Victory Tavern,* in their collective performance, they revealed that they possess that touchstone of the artist —a love for his work and a humility in its performance.

ALVAH BESSIE.

Light Comedy

Ginger Rogers and Ronald Colman in the wacky "Lucky Partners."

THE movie industry's current escapism takes a leap into pure moonshine with *Lucky Partners,* the new Ginger Rogers–Ronald Colman starring vehicle. You'll have to see it sooner or later, for it is as funny as it is wacky and as delightful as it is absurd.

Lewis Milestone, as the director, reveals a fine touch for the lightest of light comedy. It would be impossible (and unfair) to synopsize the plot. For what plot there is not only borders on the incredible, but is totally incredible to begin with. This doesn't matter. The substance and the fun in the film spring from its daffiness and from a general lightheartedness that usually degenerates, in lesser hands, into simon-pure bilge. In this instance, and with only one minor lapse into stickiness, the fun keeps bubbling throughout, like good champagne, and you'll be a sourpuss indeed if you don't enjoy it.

Start with a pretty dame like Ginger working in a Greenwich Village bookshop. As she delivers a parcel, a perfect stranger (Ronald Colman) says "Good luck" to her on the street. She is mildly amused. Right off the bat, she is given a $300 dress for nothing, and is considerably amazed. She decides to try a sweepstakes ticket and her ticket draws a horse. From this point on the plot becomes unmanageable, for Mr. Colman, still a perfect stranger, induces her to take a pre-honeymoon on a platonic basis before her impending marriage to her beau. I leave you at this point and ask you to see the rest of the film, from start to finish. The humor is not dependent on gags, but rises insidiously out of the recognizable foibles, suspicions, and generally delightful daffiness of ordinary human beings.

The story is from Sacha Guitry, and Ronald Colman is reborn from the terribly dead ashes of *Beau Geste* and such tripe. Miss Rogers, who only dances a few conventional steps in Mr. Colman's platonic arms, again demonstrates that she is in a fair way to being the screen's first comedienne. Contemplate her motion picture fate and be edified: from the initial misfortune of looking like a baby doll, to unmistakable artistry. She needs no Fred Astaire to hold your attention.

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